Collected Articles

By Talon

A Jedi’s guide to staying stuck

So, you want to stagnate as a Jedi?

You want to be painfully aware that Jediism isn’t living up to the hopes and dreams that you had when you first joined? Well, friend, you’re in the right place! I’ve been a Jedi for a little while now and I’ve had periods where I remained stagnant for a long while and have watched many other Jedi stagnate and eventually leave the path. I can show you how it’s done.

Here are 5 approaches that I’ve seen Jedi use to stagnate:

Don’t Engage

Join a forum or chat room and talk about how you want to be a Jedi, but never actually engage in a training program. Talk about the movies, books, comics and toys, but never do anything more than that. When everyone else starts talking about the philosophy and the lessons you'll be able to make a few comments based on what you know from the fiction, but when they start talking about applying the Jedi principles that are taught in lessons, it'll go completely over your head. Eventually, when you go on vacation or get busy with work or school, you’ll stop logging in and your journey will stagnate before you’ve even begun.

Stay Shallow

Ok, that approach doesn’t work for you. You’re not the type to sit around doing nothing. There is a Jedi training program and you want to work your way through it. Those lessons are a quick read and the questions are super easy to answer. So you read through them and you finish the whole assignment in an hour! Time to move to the next one!

Oh no! The instructions, if you actually read them, tell you that you're only supposed to do one assignment every two weeks.So you go read through the forum, looking over everything that you can find. You join the chat room every day. Honestly, you get a little bored because there isn’t much activity. You make it through the two weeks and sit down and finish the next assignment in an hour and begin the cycle again.

You’re doing the assignments, but you’ve stagnated because you’re not actually putting any real work into being a Jedi. You continue to be bored and frustrated and eventually drift away.

Look at Me!

So, perhaps neither of those methods will really work for you. You like to overachieve in a different way. You do the lessons and pour so much of your knowledge into the training that

everyone will have to be impressed. After all, you've served in the military, have a black belt in tae kwon do, or are a reiki master! Surely they are going to promote you to Jedi Master and everyone will be begging you to take them as your apprentice as soon as they learn just how awesome you are.

No?! What do you mean, almost everyone has that kind of training and experience? You get offended when you realize you're not some special gatekeeper of secret knowledge, and lose interest and stagnate.You came to impress people with what you know, not actually work.

Have Unrealistic Expectations

You've started your training and things are going good. You're learning a lot and are applying some of it to your life. You meditate, you exercise and you study. Eventually you get to lessons that talk about the 'Jedi Community'. What?! There is more than one training site?!

You go check out facebook and see what the Jedi Community is up to ... Oh No! What is this mess? The Jedi Community is made up of people with different opinions? They don't act like some serene and benevolent holy ones, and they have utterly shattered your idealized view of how a Jedi should and shouldn't act. Because Jedi in the fiction ALWAYS got along, were always in complete control of themselves, and would never ever hold THAT political viewpoint. These people aren't real Jedi!

Where is the framework?

What if you're none of these? You really want to become a Jedi and put in the work. Your life is a complete mess and you desperately want training in order to turn it around. You get started on the training program and do your best to be fully engaged on the forum and in the chat rooms. You watch youtube videos, listen to podcasts, buy and read books on Jedi Philosophy.

This Jedi stuff is really awesome and so you dig in. You do your work, you establish your daily practices and are learning a lot. However, after a month, maybe two, or maybe even six, your motivation starts to flag. You really do want to be a Jedi, you want to experience personal transformation, but you don’t know if you’re growing because you’ve not been getting any feedback.

Where are the senior Jedi? Why hasn’t someone stepped up and started holding you accountable, criticizing you and telling you where you need to improve. Nor is there anyone telling you how awesome, deep and wise you are. No one is saying much of anything. What kind of training program is this?

Shouldn't you have a Master or mentor or something? Why hasn’t the more senior Jedi put some sort of structure together so that you automatically have an accountability partner, a

working tribe, and motivational speakers designed specifically for you? Why is no one taking responsibility for your training?

You're telling me we're all responsible for our own training? That doesn't seem right?!

Giving Correction

Invariably there will be a time when it becomes your responsibility to correct someone. Most people are very uncomfortable providing correction and will avoid that responsibility by any means possible.Without experience, people are bad at it and the act of correcting someone often just creates more conflict rather than being corrective.

Here are some tips that might help:

First, Only correct a person if you truly have compassion for them in your heart. If you are angry, frustrated, or hurt you are not going to be in the frame of mind needed to create a safe space where you can discuss the issue with the person without judgment. Your emotion influences your behavior. Your behavior influences how what you are saying is received. If you're providing correction, you want it to be well received so that they'll sincerely put in the effort to correct their mistakes. Speaking with anger and being judgmental will typically only result in the person becoming defensive. They'll put up a wall and won't receive what you're trying to say. So, speak both with a heart and with words of compassion.

Then, If you feel love and compassion for the person, then you'll do your best to protect them. If you correct someone in public, you are potentially damaging other people's perception of them. By speaking to them alone you are saving them from greater embarrassment and showing your love and compassion for them by protecting their reputation.

This also means that you speak to the person first about the issue. Telling other people about the mistake that was made doesn't help that person at all. It damages their reputation and yours. When you gossip behind someone's back, the person that you are speaking to will have to wonder if you talk about them behind their back too. Gossiping about someone certainly doesn't help them to correct their mistakes!

Don't approach someone and try to correct them when they are angry, frustrated, irritated or sad. These emotions will automatically put up wall and make it so that what you are trying to tell them won't be fully received. It is important to try to correct a person as soon after the mistake was made as possible, but it is also better to wait until they are in the right frame of mind and are able to receive the correction.

When you correct someone, just speak with kindness and compassion and in a constructive manner. Tell the truth without being patronizing. You came to this person in order to provide correction. The last thing that you want is to have that correction lost in all the noise of awkwardly trying to compliment them to spare their feelings.

Accept your reality

Do not allow your circumstances to dictate your training and personal growth. If everything has to be just right; if you have to feel energized, motivated, and otherwise emotionally stable, you're not going to train or grow very much.

Whatever circumstance you are in, that is the reality in which you must train and grow. Don't wait for a different reality to begin. Accept the reality in which you are in and grow despite the obstacles.

Right Recipe

If you're not getting what you want, you have a recipe problem.

Let's say you are craving pizza. You open a cookbook to a recipe and follow it exactly. Your oven timer beeps and you pull the dish from the oven and it's the most beautiful pan of brownies that you've ever seen. Your recipe matters. You aren't going to get a pizza if you follow a recipe for brownies. It doesn't matter how perfectly you follow the recipe - it's never going to produce pizza.

If what you are doing hasn't made you a millionaire, then you're not following the recipe for being a millionaire. If what you are doing hasn't made you into a movie star, then you're not following the recipe for being a movie star. You can only achieve as much as the recipe that you are creating will allow, nothing more.

If you chose a pizza recipe and followed it exactly, and it came out of the oven burnt - you're following the wrong recipe. It was someone else's recipe using their ingredients, their oven, and their atmospheric pressure. It wasn't the right recipe for you and your ingredients, your oven, and your atmospherics.

I'm talking about the Jedi Method.

For whatever outcome you wish to achieve, you have to have the right recipe ... the right Jedi Intent and the right Jedi action ... to achieve that outcome. If you don't get the outcome you wanted, you chose the wrong recipe. You had the wrong intention or took the wrong action - no matter how 'Jedi' they were. If you didn't get the outcome you wanted, then you didn't apply the right recipe for your circumstances.

Problem is, in life we don't know what recipe to follow. We don't know what it will take to achieve our goals. When that is the case, and it will be most of the time, you have to earn the recipe. You have to put in work to figure out what combinations of ingredients will produce the outcome you're looking for. Since you don't know what to do, you just have to choose a course of action and commit to it.

Most progress is achieved by going the wrong direction. Fail forward. Like Edison trying to create the lightbulb. Each failure is a lesson in what doesn't work. A recipe not working isn't truly failure, it's just a lesson in what doesn't work. The only failure is in just trying a few recipes and then giving up. In that case you didn't earn the outcome you were seeking. If you want it, you have to be willing to put in the work and earn it. Let me be clear here; I'm not talking about worth, I'm talking about work. I deserve to be making 100k a year. I just haven't been following the recipe and doing the work that is necessary to have what I deserve.

If I really want to be earning 100k a year, then I need to alter my Jedi Method. My intent is to earn 100k per year. What actions am I taking to achieve that? What work am I doing? What problems am I solving for people? What value am I adding to the world? If I don't have sufficient answers or am not taking sufficient action to back up those answers - how can I expect to achieve the 100k per year outcome?

If that 100K was the pizza in my cooking analogy, just saying 'I want pizza' isn't very intentional. I need to be more clear about what kind of pizza I want and the constraints that I want in place. Do I want a thin crust, thick crust or deep dish? What toppings do I want? How fast do I want it? I mean, I can't say to myself that I want to be eating a homemade pizza in 30 minutes and then expect to go watch a 20 minute video on youtube that shows me how to make a pizza. Your actions have to match your intent. If you want to eat a pizza in 30 minutes and spend 20 of those minutes watching youtube, then you better have called for delivery first and been willing to pay for a rush job. But it's not going to be a homemade pizza.

The point that I'm getting at, in a rambling way, is that you have to put in the work. You have to make an effort to be intentional. You have to make an effort and get the actions right. You have to accept that what you try might fall flat and have a willingness to tweak your intentions and actions and keep doing that until you get the outcome you desire. You have to earn it.

Knowledge without action is ignorance

Don’t allow your study of Jedi Philosophy to be completely intellectual. Take some time to determine how to put it into action in your life. What can you do in the upcoming days or weeks to make it true for you?

For example; if you read the Jedi Code, what can you do to apply the code? How can you add more peace, knowledge, serenity, and harmony? How can you deepen your understanding of the Force?

The philosophy shouldn’t only be something that you just meditate on and talk about with other Jedi. It should be applied when you go about your daily routine. It should influence how you interact with your family, friends, co-workers, boss, classmates and teachers. “There is no death” and so the philosophy should not be dead, it should be alive in you.

Knowledge without action is ignorance.

What can I learn?

In every situation, ask ‘What can I learn from this?’ Especially ask this question when you find yourself thinking ‘I know this already!’

No matter the situation, there is probably something new that you can learn. There is a new perspective that you can look at it from. Consider the small things that you might know, but haven’t been applying.

What will you learn today?

The cost of a mistake

"Recently, I was asked if I was going to fire an employee who made a mistake that cost the company $600,000. No, I replied, I just spent $600,000 training him. Why would I want somebody to hire his experience?" - Thomas Watson

McGregor's management X and Y theories come to mind. McGregor wrote that for management theory X, if a manager believes that an employee generally doesn't like to work and needs to be motivated in order to do a good job, the manager will choose an authoritarian management style and will tend to be a micromanager.

In management theory Y, the manager presupposes that the employee takes pride in their work and enjoys the challenge of completing tasks that are set for them. This manager will choose a participative management style and will believe that employees will hold themselves accountable.

So, under theory X, I wouldn't be surprised to see the employee fired. The manager would look only at the employee as someone who cost the company $600,000 and would fire him to serve as an example to motivate others to be more careful about their work and not make mistakes.

A theory Y manager would believe that the employee would feel terrible about losing the company so much money and take the lessons learned from the incident to heart and not be likely to make those mistakes again and be a better employee because of it.

Notice how easily the theories can wind up being self-fulfilling prophecies. Employees who are treated with mistrust and are micromanaged are likely to quickly become dissatisfied with their jobs and need more motivation to do things right. Conversely, people who are allowed to take ownership of their work will take pride in it and enjoy successful completion of tasks.

What does this have to do with Jediism? A Jedi is a leader, so knowing and understanding leadership theory is important for that reason alone. However, this is relevant when considering how Academic Administrators treat their students and how a Master interacts with their apprentice. It is also relevant in our interaction with peers.

Allow me a chance to go out on a little tangent here. There is this toxic habit of some in the community, to seek out flaws in people they don't like or with whom they disagree and try to use those flaws in an attempt to run them out of the Jedi Community; Just like smear campaigns used by politicians.

The first six Star Wars movies tell the story of Anakin's fall and redemption. Star Wars is all about redemption. Jedi will make mistakes. Some will make some pretty serious ones and will

deal with failings in their character. I know I have and I probably will again in the future. I am human and am still growing toward my potential. I'm nowhere near there yet. Understanding that and having the hope that if I make a serious mistake and hurt and offend people, that I'll be able to learn from the mistake and grow from it, means that I should extend the same opportunity for redemption to them.

Ok, it wasn't actually a tangent because it comes back to the principal topic. Do we allow the Jedi to commit the $600,000 mistake and learn the lessons from it, or do we fire them -- try to run them out of the community -- and don't give them the opportunity to be mentored and guided toward being a better person.

It's a shame that in the Jedi Community it depends on politics as to which tact a person will take. If it's someone that they don't like … "Get the pitchfork and torches!", but if it is a friend, despite them doing worse, it's all "We're Jedi, we should forgive." Hypocrisy! Don't be that person.

As our community is becoming more quiet, it becomes increasingly important that we focus on having the right attitude toward students and mentees. There is no point in trying to engage with them in order to make them happy. Happiness comes from within. It's not your job as a teacher and a mentor to grab students and mentees by the hand and drag them into their training. As Cy Wakeman says, 'Work with the willing.' Encourage students to be accountable for themselves, responsible for their own happiness and their own motivation. Those high-accountables will seek out people and create their own networks. Of course, that is what a mentor is supposed to do for a mentee, but if the mentee suddenly disappears -- it's not the mentor's responsibility to hunt them down and drag them back to training. The student has to want to be there, has to have a strong desire to transform from the mundane into the Jedi.

Is that X Theory or Y Theory? I'm not sure. I'm a little torn. To a degree, a student needs to be taught to find their inner resourcefulness and be high-accountables. But it's one of those things that you generally learn by doing, learn by being.

What do you think?

Deal with it later

If you've studied any kind of meditation then you've heard that before. If a stray thought forces itself into your conscious mind, you acknowledge the thought and then let it go and address it later. However, I've not seen a lot of discussion about addressing the thought later.

When you're meditating, all manner of stray thoughts will enter your conscious mind. Many will have no importance. "I feel hot." "My nose itches." Or "Doggo feels soft!" when your pup decides to sit next to you when you meditate. With these thoughts there is probably no need to deal with them later. You can just acknowledge them and let them go.

Other thoughts, like "I wonder what I should fix for dinner." Has a little more importance because it is something that you'll have to deal with later, but you can just acknowledge the thought and let it go because you know that it will come up again later on its own to be dealt with and it will have to be dealt with before dinner time.

However, what we really need to be aware of is that we'll have thoughts that are pretty important, but don't have that time constraint that forces us to deal with them. Serious issues, hard issues, issues that we don't want to deal with will arise during meditation. Issues of self-confidence, anger, anxiety, and depression will all decide to step into our conscious thought. It is not enough to just acknowledge the thought, say to yourself 'I'll address it later' and then let it go. It's human nature to just kick that can down the road. We promise to address it later, but then we never do. When it comes up again, we say 'Later' again. Instead, when we say 'I'll address it later' we promise to set up a time where we actually address it.

Indeed, remembering that the definition of meditation is to focus one's mind, we could choose that issue as the topic of our next meditation. Meditate on that thought, sit with it, focus on it, be mindful of it and be present with it; seeking to understand its impact on our lives and how the situation that the thought is associated with can be looked at from different points of view.

In this way, meditation can be a process of mental house cleaning. Issues pop-up and we deal with them honestly. It's not a lie to say 'I'll deal with that thought later' because we actually schedule a time to do so. With the issue dealt with ... and it may take many many meditation sessions to do so ... it will no longer pop-up in other meditation sessions and so in 10, 20, or 30 years thoughts won't come up ... not only because we've gotten super skilled at mental focus, but also because we've been cleaning house - clearing out the cobwebs and decorating it as we want it to look, and feeling more at home in our own heads

Circulate Knowledge

“Knowledge is like money: To be of value it must circulate, and in circulating it can increase in quantity and, hopefully, in value.” - Louis L'Amour

Intelligence researcher James Flynn noticed that there was a three point per decade rise in IQ from the 1970s to the 1990s. He and other experts in the field agree that this increase is a result of improved health and nutrition, a higher overall standard of living, and increased access to better education.

Since this meditation is about the circulation of money, I’ll focus on the last part; the increased access to better education. Flynn uses basketball to illustrate the point. As basketball games became popular sports to watch on TV, the average player began mimicking the techniques used by professional athletes in their community pick-up games. This created a challenge for their peers, who learned the skill and then created counter techniques. It’s a basketball arms race.

With knowledge, someone gains access to specialized data and then shares it with their peers and so the information that was specialized now becomes public knowledge. This allows more people to provide more thorough testing in a variety of situations and circumstances and thus build on the knowledge. As Louis L’Amour says, increasing the quantity and value in the process.

The worrisome thing is that since the 90s there has been a reverse Flynn effect, where IQs are steadily declining. I haven’t seen a solid scientific theory explaining why, but I certainly have a few of my own. I suspect it is primarily due to the reliance on the internet and obsession with social media. People are too used to looking things up and forgetting it instead of truly internalizing and building on knowledge.

How does the Flynn Effect impact the Jedi? Speaking from my own experience with the community, I’ve seen the quality of training rise dramatically in the period from 2006 to 2009. I believe that this was due to the increased popularity in the ‘Pragmatic’ approach to Jediism. There was a push to include topics, such as Leadership, Psychology, Communication, First Aid and other mundane knowledge in Jedi training. Many Jedi quickly agreed and now most Jedi Instruction includes these subjects in their curriculum. However, like with the Flynn Effect, it seems that Jedi training has stagnated.

I helped push the pragmatic approach to Jediism and introduced training on Leadership and Communications to several organizations. I did so with the expectation that this information would be built upon and improved. However, now a decade later, those organizations have

discontinued lessons in those topics or still use the courses that I introduced. I find this terribly sad because what I introduced only scratched the surface.

Another issue has been the lack of legacy building. The instructors who created the training material a decade ago are still the ones in charge of creating the training material. There might have been a few additions to that cadre, but there have been greater losses than gains.

Perhaps an answer to the stagnation of the Jedi Community is to circulate knowledge. Instead of gatekeeping lessons behind closed doors, only made available to members, if these were freely exchanged, better material could be created.

Carriages of the past

"In the carriages of the past you can't go anywhere." - Maxim Gorky

One of my favorite books as a teenager was “The Walking Drum” by Louis L’Amour. The main character was talking about who his father was and received the reply “A ship doesn’t sail on yesterday’s winds.” That quote stuck with me all these years and I believe that L’Amour either read Gorky or they had similar ways of expressing the same principle. The great deeds of your ancestors won’t make you great.

In martial arts training I’ve seen people start bragging about the people that they’ve trained with. Precise lineages are kept, as if a direct connection to some long dead master will magically impart skill. I’ve seen the same attempt at establishing legitimacy through lineage in the Jedi Community. It’s foolishness. The carriage of the past won’t take you anywhere. To achieve anything requires that you put in the work and effort. A teacher might be known for their ability, but they can not guarantee that the student will have the same work ethic themselves and require that same work ethic in others.

You are not your teacher. Nor are you your student. The only person that has control over how well you learn and how well you practice your craft is you. If your ancestor, whether we are talking about physical lineage or educational lineage, was known for great skill and knowledge, you will probably benefit from their reputation and resourcefulness. However, there are many children and many students who squander the opportunities afforded to them. The edge they may have gained is lost on them. On the other hand, there are many people who seem to have very little resourcefulness, but achieve great things. That is because a person’s resources aren’t found in material things, or even in knowledge. Those can easily be wasted. A person’s resources come from their soul. Knowledge and material things can be earned.

You don’t need that one special master to make you a great Jedi. There are no masters. There are just people that are trying as best as they know how. With a little bit of work, you can pursue your own knowledge and your own path. You can study what work is available and then branch off and study each part in greater detail. Jedi 1 talks about Taoism in passing, go read the Tao Te Ching and other Taoist works to gain a greater understanding of how it is like Jediism and how it isn’t. Jedi 2 talks about Stoicism in passing, go read the Enchiridion of Epictetus and Meditations of Marcus Aurelius and other deeper works to understand how Stoicism is like and unlike Jediism. Jedi 3 talks about leadership, go study that topic. Utilize the resources that you do have available; chat rooms and forums where you can talk to Jedi and libraries and classrooms where you can study in depth. You have at your disposal everything that you need to become a great Jedi, you just have to have the innate resourcefulness and the desire to search it out.

Toward Success

“If you wish to succeed in life, make perseverance your bosom friend, experience your wise counselor, caution your elder brother, and hope your guardian genius.” - Joseph Addison

Addison is saying that we need at least four things in order to have a successful life. Perseverance, experience, caution, and hope.

The first thing that I’d ask someone who is pursuing a successful life is to define what that means to them. Each of us will have different definitions of success based upon what we value. A person might say having a nice house, a fancy car, or a million dollars in their bank account. That is superficial though. What do those things represent to the individual? For one person those things represent freedom. For another, they represent security. If that’s the case, what else might represent freedom or security? Are there other, non-materialistic ways to live those values?

A homeless man may say that they are free. They aren’t bound to a certain schedule, don’t have many material possessions to be attached to, and don't have responsibilities that demand their time and attention. From one perspective they are free and thus might satisfy the definition of being successful. Does being homeless require perseverance, experience, caution and hope?

My point here is that success is just a word that needs context in order to create meaning. Perseverance, Experience, Caution and Hope are certainly good things to pursue.

Perseverance is needed to achieve any significant degree of skill. If you want to become competent at any skill, you have to spend time practicing that skill. If you have a natural affinity for a skill, you might not require too much practice in order to be competent. However, if you wish to move from mere competence into excellence or expertise, you have to be willing to persevere and spend a significant amount of time in practice. No matter what, you’ll run into issues where you don’t feel like practicing and will need to persevere in order to get that practice in.

Experience is important when turning technical ability into true skill. When developing many skill sets, pure practice will be able to take you pretty far. You can target different aspects of a skill to practice in order to get it right. However, to transfer that technical skill into true expertise, you have to practice that skill under realistic conditions. That’s experience. A boxer can spend a great deal of time lifting weight to develop strength. He can spend time on the heavy bag to develop power. He can shadow box to develop footwork and work the speed bag for developing speed. Each of those are important, but it takes getting in the ring and actually boxing to

develop true expertise. It takes getting hit to know if you can take getting hit. It takes pressure to determine if you can perform under pressure. Experience matters.

Caution is also necessary. When you develop a skill set and work towards becoming successful at something, you have to go into the process with your eyes wide open. If you think something is going to be easy and that you'll achieve easy success on the first try, there is a pretty good chance that life is going to slap you back down because things that you aren't aware of and didn't take into account will pop-up and throw you for a loop. So it is important to be cautious but not overly so. Be cautious enough that you are well prepared for the roadblocks that are likely to show up on your road to success, but not so cautious that you fear those roadblocks and never get started.

Lastly and something that is most important at all levels, is hope. You have to have that hope that you can and will succeed. It's that hope that will keep you going when things are tough and you just don't want to practice or the experience. Hope will temper that caution and so that you don't become paralyzed with caution, believing that you aren't prepared for everything. Hope will say, of course you're not prepared for everything, but even if you fail, you can learn and start again. Keep trying! Hope dreams magnificent dreams for us and creates a vision of a wonderful tomorrow. It is the wings of hope that help us to soar.

Dragons!

“Fairy tales are more than true — not because they tell us dragons exist, but because they tell us dragons can be beaten.” – Neil Gaiman paraphrase of G.K. Chesterton

In Chesterton’s original, he writes that children with imaginations already knew that dragons exist. Consider for a moment what goes bump in your night? What troll terrorizes your tomorrow? What poltergeist haunts your past? What dragon dominates your day? Anger? Anxiety, Depression?

As children, our fears were of foolish things. What demons lurk in the dark of the closet or hallway? What bogey resides under the bed? As experience dispelled notions of the fantastic, our fears of monsters gave way to fears of pain and embarrassment. Frustration that the world isn’t fair and a feeling of powerlessness.

The dragon is very real. A fairy tale is just one form of story that teaches us that dragons can be beaten. I would encourage everyone who reads this to identify your personal monsters. Define what it is that is holding you back from greatness and find some stories of people, both real and fiction, who have taken on that monster and defeated it. If you want to change the world, but are fighting with demons of depression, find stories of people who have changed the world and defeated that depression. Discover the methods that they used. It might not work for you, but you can at least see that you’re not alone and that it is possible. Find stories that encourage, empower and embolden you to become the person that you have the potential to be.

This is one case in which it is a good thing to be aware of the fact that you’re not that unique. Someone has been where you are, faced the same thing that you’ve faced … and they’ve beaten it. It doesn’t matter if you are dealing with the loss of a loved one and are experiencing extreme grief and depression. Someone else has and they’ve managed to fight that fight and then go on to do great things. If you are dealing with a medical diagnosis that has shaken your world, you’re not alone. Someone has already been there and they’ve fought and achieved great things while in between bouts of sickness from chemo. Whatever it is that you’ve faced, someone has been there. Go find a tribe of people who are experiencing what you’re experiencing. Connect with them and draw from their wisdom. Pull from their strength and turn around and do the same for others.

Your dragon can be beaten!

The Motivated

“It's not my job to hold your hand. It's my job to take motivated people and show them how to become better.”- Chuck Noll

I actually selected this quote yesterday and so I had a lot of extra time to meditate on it. However, today I was relatively unmotivated and it took a friend to give me a swift kick in the rear for me to get working.

It’s days like today that makes it clear that motivation isn’t a reliable way to get things done. It takes discipline and passion. You have to believe in what you are doing and be willing to put in some effort no matter how motivated or unmotivated you feel. We’re Jedi; there is no emotion, there is peace. We’re not supposed to react to our emotions, we’re supposed to accept them and do what is right no matter what.

Chuck Noll was a football coach and so the context of the quote is in reference to how he treated his team. However, the words have a broader application. Applying it to Jedi training, It’s not the job of the administration to coax and cajole you into completing assignments and participating with the community. It is their job to work with you and help you become better, the responsibility for your motivation and your attention to your work is yours.

This goes further and into the realm of every type of organization. If an organization makes a decision, it’s not their job to convince you that they made the right decision. It’s not their job to convince you that you need to adopt a new way of thinking. If a decision has been made, there is a good chance that it was discussed in length and it was decided that it made sense to move in a new direction. As a member of the organization, it’s your responsibility to get yourself motivated to adopt the new policy or be motivated to leave. As Cy Wakeman of Reality-based Leadership puts it: “Work with the willing.” No leader has time to go and hand hold the recalcitrant. A leader should play favorites. It is time better spent to focus their efforts on the people that embrace change, that embrace the culture, principles, and values of the organization and show the unwilling to the door.

As a Jedi, I want to work with the willing. I want to work with a person that is motivated and willing to change their lives. It gets frustrating to have people come to me seeking transformation, which is something that I’ve had a great deal of training in as a Life Coach, and then get all resistant when I start asking questions about how they could spend their time putting in work to find that transformation. If you’re not willing to do the work, don’t ask. If you are looking for some secret magic pill that will change your world without you having to put in any effort because you’re unmotivated to spend the time looking inward … don’t come to me.

I want to work with the willing. I want to take motivated people and help them be better.

Energy

"The difference between one man and another is not mere ability - it is energy." - Thomas Arnold

Two Masters, sharing the same knowledge and having the same ability can be as different as night and day in how they transfer that knowledge. It's energy. What passion does the Master bring to the material?

Even more, a master with superior knowledge and experience may not be able to connect with students and be as successful at transmitting that knowledge as one that, though less knowledgeable and experienced, brings greater energy to the presentation.

This difference isn't confined to teaching. We'll see it in the manner people approach their fitness, their relationships and their jobs. As Jedi we need to be mindful of the energy that we bring to a situation. More energy isn't always better. A person being highly energetic would be out of place at many funerals. Someone with low energy and passion probably couldn't make it as a motivational speaker. Tailor your energy to the situation.

Consider also that your energy isn't at a set bar. You can vary it. As Jedi we're all students. We're all looking to better ourselves; we're looking to grow as human beings so that we can serve. If we get stuck in that energetic flow of being a student, completely focused on how we can improve ourselves, we might miss an opportunity to serve or teach. Those things require different energies. It is difficult to be a good master while in the mode of the student. The student is always questioning everything. The master needs to be able to present information with confidence or it's not going to be well received by the student. The reverse is also true. A student who has the master mindset … yeah, you know the type, the know-it-all. The student that is always comparing what you are teaching to what they've learned elsewhere and providing suggestions on how it should be done though they haven't completed anything significant in their life … they are hard to teach because they aren't presenting the right energy.

It is a wonderful thing. A person can both have the energy of a student and a master, depending upon the setting. That can even exist in a relationship between two people. On one subject Person A is teaching B. But in another subject, Person B is the expert and is sharing that knowledge with A.

Find that right balance. Reject the mindset that would tell you that you only deserve to be the student.Reject the mindset that would have you expect to be always treated as a Master.

Tomorrow Hopes

“Tomorrow hopes we have learned something from yesterday.” - John Wayne

In today’s meditation my mind jumped between two topics. The first has to do with a saying that I picked up from leadership guru, John Maxwell. He writes that we should ‘fail forward.’ Yesterday was full of stumbles, mistakes, and failures. However, they don’t have to be complete failures. Every failure has a silver lining. The pain of yesterday is washed away and we’re given a new chance tomorrow. Tomorrow we can put the lessons of our failures to work. Each choice that we make is like a scientific test. We have a theory of what our best option will be. We test that theory and if our outcome is not what we expected, we can file that information away and try something new next time.

Our failure is only complete when we decide that we’re going to do the same thing over and over, expecting the same results. There is no ignorance, there is knowledge. Our ignorance gives way to knowledge as we put our ideas to the test.

The next topic was a result of my meditation on the quote, but isn’t fully related to the quote. To explain; I mentally reworded the quote to read ‘I learned something yesterday for the hope of tomorrow.’ It is the Kaizen principle of doing small things each day to gradually improve performance tomorrow.

We each have different facets of our lives. Physical health, mental health, self-development, relationships, service, and career. None of these facets are perfect. There are small things that we can do in each of these categories each day that will gradually improve the quality of our life. We could live weights today in order to be stronger tomorrow. We can read books to increase our knowledge and become better in many different facets of life. We can take the time to communicate with our friends and family, letting them know that they are loved and strengthen that bond. We can deny ourselves frivolous expenditures and use the money to pay off debts faster.

What can you do today that will improve the hope of your tomorrow?

Human Resilience

"Man never made any material as resilient as the human spirit." - Bernard Williams

I love this quote because I fully believe it. The resiliency of mankind is astounding. The trauma that we can endure, the situations we can adapt to and not only survive but begin to thrive in is awesome.

When I was in high school, my father lost his job. He had been making decent money and had just recently bought 20 acres intending to build a house. He quickly found another job, but it didn't pay enough to sustain two rents and the decision was made to move out to the 20 acres as it was the cheaper of the two options. However, it was a blank piece of property. No electricity, no running water, and no structure. We lived in tents at first, but it was turning too cold, so Dad built a small shack and found a small camping trailer that we moved into. New York winters are pretty cold and there was no insulation in this shack. I can remember having a fire going in the wood stove and the thermometer on the wall above that stove was reading below zero. I also remember waking up in the middle of the night very cold because the fire had gone out and walking outside to get wood to get the fire going again and not worrying about putting on shoes because I couldn't feel my feet anyway.

Despite the difficulties of living there, and there were plenty, I have very fond memories. We adapted and made do. Despite living in conditions that we might like to imagine only exist in 3rd world countries, my family had a lot of fun.

A line in the Jedi Code states: There is no emotion; there is peace. One perspective of this code is that a Jedi seeks equanimity, emotional resilience. It's the ability to spring back to a position of peace, no matter the strength of our emotion. When we feel anxiety, anger, depression or grief, we can know that we have emotional resilience and that whatever the situation is that we are facing, we will adapt. We can imagine our worst case scenario and find evidence of people who have adapted to that situation and thrived in it.

Losing a loved one, whether due to death or just an end to the relationship isn't the end of the world. We are resilient. We can adapt.

When our health fails, whether due to an accident or disease, it isn't the end of the world. We are resilient. We can adapt.

When we lose everything that we own, it isn't the end of the world. We are resilient. We can adapt.

I know this with complete certainty, because I have experienced all those things. In each of them, my world was completely devastated. However, I'm still alive. I am still adapting, still growing and bettering myself. Still striving to be the best Jedi that I can be.

I'm nothing special. If I can do this, so can you.

Foppery of Titles

"Titles are but nicknames, and every nickname is a title. The thing is perfectly harmless in itself, but it marks a sort of foppery in the human character which degrades it." - Thomas Paine

I would recommend reading the whole of Thomas Paine's "The Foppery of Titles". It is an interesting read, speaking mainly to the use of titles of nobility, but is applicable to the Jedi.

I do not apply the title of Master to myself or any other person. Instead it is representative of a dream. My goal is to craft myself into a Master with the full understanding that at this point it is completely impossible. My focus is on the 'Master pieces.' I believe that the application of those tips will move a person in the general direction of mastery, but won't get them all the way there.

Foppery; the excess concern with one's clothing and appearance.

That is how I see the use of the titles in the Jedi Community. Do the Jedi really need a class system? That is exactly how some Jedi treat them. A person wearing the title of Knight or Master outright expects a higher level of deference because they wear that title. That attitude is just absurd. The Jedi have only been in existence for less than 25 years and there have been major shifts in the development of the philosophy. Even those that have been around from the beginning are still exploring, growing and trying to figure it all out. It's absurd to expect that just because you've been around for a decade and have risen to a leadership position that others are obligated to seek you out for advice, or follow your lead and work on your projects when they've had their own ideas for a project they want to work on. It is pure vanity to expect someone to seek you out for your advice and input.

Those that defend their rights to use the term Master are doing so out of vanity and little more. I, personally, believe that it is unworthy of the Jedi. I'm not a master and will never claim to be. To me, the term master is a far off dream. A vision that I am shooting for even though I hope to never be able to achieve it because at this point I only have a shadowed glimpse of it. I haven't seen it, so I don't fully know it. I certainly know that no one that I know is even close.

Deserved

“The employer generally gets the employees he deserves” - J. Paul Getty

I wonder if it is the same for Jedi. Do our training programs attract the Jedi that we deserve? Members aren’t employees. They are an odd mix of student, client, and employee, as the organizations have multiple functions. However, I think there is some truth to the adaptation that an organization gets the members that it deserves.

Jedi leadership establishes the culture of the organization. Thus, the members that they keep will be a reflection of that culture. If the leadership has ideas but never spends the time to put those ideas into action and is generally uninvolved in the organization, it should be no shock to see members that are inactive and never complete the program.

If the leadership spends a great deal of its time with political maneuvering, with each individual leader vying to promote their vision of what a Jedi is and does and the organization doesn’t have a unified vision with the leadership team working in unison toward that vision, then it should be no surprise to have a lot of members that are extremely toxic.

If the leadership team doesn’t spend a significant amount of their time studying in order to update and deepen their training curriculum, it shouldn’t be a surprise if the membership doesn’t show much growth as a Jedi.

I firmly believe that individuals join the Jedi community and specific organizations with a desire to experience some form of transformation. Specifically they are looking to be transformed from being a “mundane” into being a Jedi. From conversations that I’ve had, community members see themselves as a wellspring of unactualized potential and view the Jedi of fiction as a group that has actualized their potential. The service that they are expecting the community and each organization to provide is that transformation experience.

I know that I harp on that a lot, but I believe it to be true. We Jedi spend far too much time with political maneuvering and talking about which vision for the future of the Jedi is best, all the while neglecting that basic desire to see transformation in ourselves and helping others to achieve the same. Force powers? It’s not the supernatural that people are after, it’s the hope of what those powers will give them. They want control of their lives and seek to obtain that through force abilities. Nothing wrong with that. If that can be used as a vehicle for transformation, then it needs to be done. Do that and it will cease to be considered as fluff by those that don’t pay too much attention to the development of force powers. And on the converse, if you don’t believe in force powers, then provide a different vehicle for transformation without them and you’ll see people flocking to you.

Focus on being a Jedi and put the serving of your membership’s interests above all else and you’ll truly get the members that you deserve.

Discipline

"I know you've heard it a thousand times before. But it's true - hard work pays off. If you want to be good, you have to practice, practice, practice. If you don't love something, then don't do it." - Ray Bradbury

Most people expect that it requires talent in order to be good at something. That's just not true. Success is measured more by a person's ability to show up regularly and put in the practice. Practice can make up for a lack of talent, but you're not going to develop a talent if you don't spend enough time in practice.

In her book "Grit" Angela Duckworth writes that researchers have found that there are four psychological traits that successful people have in common: Interest, practice, purpose, and hope.

First is interest. As Ray Bradbury said 'If you don't love something, then don't do it.' You have to have an interest in what you are doing. Though there may be aspects of your pursuit that you don't like, your love for it will keep you going back to it. If you don't have a love and a passion for what you do, you probably aren't likely to have the grit necessary to succeed.

Second is practice. You must dedicate time toward growth. It can't be haphazard practice either, it needs to be focused. You need to take the time to evaluate your strengths and weaknesses and develop a plan that will help you improve and master your skill in a measurable way.

Then there is purpose. You must believe that what you are doing matters, not only to yourself but others as well. You may practice at something for a long time before you determine how it matters to others, but you must see how you add value to other people's lives

Finally there is hope. Hope doesn't come in at the end, it must exist at every stage. If you don't have hope that you will succeed at what you've set out to do, you won't. Becoming good at something is going to be a long and difficult road. It will be a road fraught with twists, turns and failures. You will need hope in order to pick yourself up and keep going. Hope that you can succeed and hope that you can add value to people's lives, perhaps even changing them in the process.

There is no emotion

Let's talk about the Jedi Code. I can already sense the mumbling and groaning through the force. The Jedi community has been around for twenty years, the code has been analyzed ad nauseum. Well, one more time isn't going to hurt. It reminds me of a story I recently read:

Alan Stein, Jr., a professional basketball development coach, went to watch Kobe Bryant practice early one morning. He got up early and tried to beat Kobe to the gym, but Kobe was already there with sweat pouring off of him. So Alan sat and watched him. While impressed with his dedication to practice, Alan was bored to tears. For the first 40 minutes all Kobe had done was practice basic drills. After practice Alan asked "Kobe, you are the best player in the world. Why are you spending so much time practicing the most basic drills?" Kobe chuckled and said "Why do you think I'm the best player in the world? The best never get bored with the basics."

Don't take me wrong, I'm not the best at anything. I'm just a student. Yet, I've never gotten bored with the basics. Each time I analyze the code, I learn something new.

The Jedi Code starts out with the segment "There is no emotion." Most often, the first line of the code is used as a mantra when a Jedi is experiencing some powerful negative emotions. I doubt that many of you start whispering over and over "There is no emotion, there is peace" when you're feeling happy, excited, giddy with anticipation, filled with wonder, or bursting with love. Well, except for that last one. Sometimes love sucks.

No. We repeat the mantra when we're feeling so angry that we want to throw some plates or hit something, when we're so frustrated that we want to yell and scream, so filled with fear and anxiety that we're unable to move forward as we like, so hurt with sadness, betrayal and grief that we want to do nothing but find some deep hole in the ground and cry our eyeballs out. It is those moments that we want to be Jedi Master Spock, governed by logic and devoid of emotion. I think we've all had times where we thought that it would be nice if there was a switch on our body that we could hit to turn off our emotions. 'Here, pull my finger.' Click. No joy, happiness, excitement? That might be a fair exchange if we didn't have to experience the depths of pain and sorrow that threaten to swallow us whole.

Being the ever wise and well-adjusted Jedi that we are, we stuff those emotions down deep. We distract ourselves and refuse to give them any time in our active thinking process, we won't talk about our emotional issues, we'll avoid places that stir up those emotions, and might even go so far as to drink alcohol, eat comfort foods, or use other substances in order to keep negative emotions at bay. We do this, knowing that it is dangerous ... and if you're not aware, it is dangerous!

Avoiding our emotions doesn't help. In fact, because we don't process what we're feeling, we won't learn from the experience. The feelings won't go away and the next time it or something similar happens it will be even more difficult to emotionally manage. Worse, research has shown that suppressing emotions makes them even stronger. Until we've dealt with the emotions, little things will remind us of the issues and the emotions will bubble to the surface, requiring that we shove them down again. We have limited cognitive energy. The energy that we constantly use to keep our emotions suppressed reduces the energy that we can use to focus on other tasks. Want to meditate? Want to focus on learning something new or completing an assignment at work? Suppressing your emotions reduces your effectiveness at those tasks.

Inhibiting our emotions has physical impacts as well. It causes stress and anxiety which results in all the things associated with stress from other sources; increased blood pressure, weight gain, heart disease, increased chance for diabetes and even cancer. People who suppress their emotions are more likely to have stiff and sore joints, bone weaknesses and other illnesses due to a weakened immune system.

If that isn't enough, our relationships and other social interactions suffer as well. Emotional inhibition causes memory problems and increases the chances for misunderstandings which can result in conflict. This is because when a person is suppressing their emotions they pay less attention to the social and emotional cues that are present in regular everyday interactions. The quality of our relationships depend on our ability to emotionally express our needs and preferences. An appropriate expression of anger provides a signal that the behavior that caused the anger needs to be assessed and corrected if it was inappropriate. If we suppress our emotions, those around us will not receive emotional input on how what they are saying or doing is being received.

While exploring the concept of 'There is no emotion' I stumbled across a fascinating paper that talked about people who had experienced trauma to their ventromedial frontal cortex or had it completely removed. This is the part of the brain that is the source of our emotions. Their emotional capacity was drastically reduced, but experienced little change in their other cognitive functions. They performed well in tests of their memory, perception, learning ability, speech and math. However, they lost their ability to make good decisions, plan for the future and learn from past mistakes. These acts require value judgments to be made, which is a product of our emotions. Coffee or tea? Coke or Pepsi? Blue or Green? These are emotional decisions, how they make you feel determines which you'd choose. Military service or University? It's determined by your values, an emotional construct.

We like to think that our morality is based purely on reason, but researchers have found that a child's moral cognition develops at the same time as their ability to empathize. We all develop a sense of fairness and then come to understand that what is fair in one case might not be fair in another. Some philosophers believe that morality and ethics is based on fundamental truths. David Hume disagreed. He believed that most ethical and moral behavior begins in statements of facts, but must then make a jump from what *is* to what *ought* to be. This has become known

as the is-ought problem, Hume's law, or more colorfully, Hume's Guillotine. While this law doesn't specifically speak about emotion, that jump from *is* to *ought* is a value statement and requires emotions.

Going back to the study of the people with a damaged ventromedial prefrontal cortex, these individuals could make correct moral judgements when faced with hypotheticals, but in applying the moral principles to their own lives, they struggled.

I went through all of that fascinating research to say this; There is no 'There is no emotion.' We can't take that statement literally because emotions play such a significant role in our lives and suppressing them can cause serious damage to our minds, bodies, spirits and relationships. Here is my value statement: A Jedi ought to acknowledge and feel their emotions, but regulate the expression of those emotions in an appropriate manner. Being emotionally reactive with undisciplined emotions doesn't make a person a Gray Jedi or a Sith, it makes them an immature person. If it's a rare occurrence, then they had an immature moment as we all do at times. If they are normally emotionally reactive, immaturity is their state of being.

Feel, but regulate your expression.

No emotion

No Emotion. Why is this something that a Jedi would pursue? When speaking with warriors you will often find different points of view on whether or not we should strive to exist without emotion. I know of one martial arts instructor who holds the view-point that emotion is merely a response based on our perception of a situation and causes us to color the situation. In the study of the Tao, from which many Jedi draw their teachings, one learns that 'good' and 'bad' are merely the perception of an event. The Bible teaches that Christians should strive to have a spirit of thanksgiving no matter what the situation brings.

As Angelus, a Jedi instructor at various sites, states - the etymology of emotion is about being moved from your normal state of being. The only reason you are being moved is because there is something that you experience which causes the emotional effect. It is an if-then situation. You see a flower bloom and you smile. You fall and hurt your knee and you grimace. You feel great loss at the passing of a friend and so you cry. All of your emotions are based upon your perception of reality. Our goal as Jedi is to always seek the truth of a situation. Many religions believe that you should rejoice as a loved one passes on, because they are moving from this life to another one. Instead of focusing on the personal loss that you feel, you could instead focus on the joy that the person is gaining from going to be with God. Good and bad is a matter of perspective.

You are human and so you will feel, but to what degree should you be moved? If you understand that everything you face is just a part of life, an opportunity to grow - you can find peace. Think about the terror you might feel as you see a truck rushing recklessly at you. The terror is a result from fearing death. It's an indicator that there are things that you have left to do and that you aren't prepared to die. A warrior realizes that death could come at any moment and so he/she lives her life in such a manner that she is always prepared to meet death.

Suppose you feel terrified just talking to a pretty girl or are anxious in general. You are afraid of rejection and perhaps being a social outcast. Your fear serves as an indicator that there is an issue in your life that you need to deal with. You are too overly concerned with your social standing, so much so that it impedes upon your chances for happiness ... After all, you'd be happier taking part with the crowd and developing a relationship with people and with that special someone.

Emotion is the process of being moved away from your normal state of being. It serves as a trigger to let you know that something is wrong in your life or that something is really right. As a Jedi, your goal is to seek that state of equilibrium, where peace is your constant state of being because there is no fear, worry, doubt or things left undone and unsaid and you are constantly and consistently working your ways to a better you.

Emotion and Peace

Doing research so that I could write on the academics of inner peace has been a challenge. inner peace is completely subjective and cannot be easily studied from a scientific standpoint. Not many articles in academic journals defined inner peace. The one that tried defined it as ‘whatever you think it is.’ … Helpful.

Most of the papers that I read discussed the tools for obtaining inner peace; such as mindfulness, breathing techniques, massage, watching TV and physical activity. It appeared to me that they were equating relaxation and calmness to inner peace.

I know that the line of the code ‘There is no emotion; there is peace’ is most often used as a calming mantra to help a person get through a stressful situation. It is about using recitation of the phrase to become mindful and focus on one’s breathing in order to relax and find a state of calmness. That fits in perfectly with the academic papers. It isn’t what I’m looking for, though.

A mantra is useful on a micro scale, but I’m interested in the macro. I can use the mantra to find calm when I need to, but how does the code apply philosophically? As many times as it has been altered or thrown out for something different leads me to believe that it’s philosophic validity is questioned.

A mantra doesn’t provide much guidance on how I should face the struggle of being a Jedi month to month and year to year. As a Jedi, I would love to live in a state of permanent relaxation and calmness. I’m not sure if the tools that were mentioned would be too helpful in achieving that. 24/7 massages while watching TV? Sign me up! I don’t think that I would be of much service to anyone, though.

Enough dancing around the subject; let’s get to it. What is inner peace?

In interpersonal conflict resolution peace is broken into positive and negative peace. I’m going to use the same method for defining inner peace:

Negative peace is the absence of ‘violence.’ Think of violence as all of those negative emotions that you feel. Anger, hatred, anxiety, depression, doubt, and fear. Negative peace is when you avoid feeling those feelings. You use alcoholism, drug use, food, binge watching shows on netflix, physical exercise, your job … anything that you might use to avoid facing what you are feeling. That is negative peace. You bury them and just don’t deal with them.

Positive peace is the use of a framework to deal with emotions in a constructive manner. Meditation and mindfulness work for this. Not so much getting massages, watching TV or physical activity.

Part of this process of dealing with emotions is the understanding that there are no emotions. What I mean to say is that they aren't entities of themselves. When you feel an emotion, it isn't some outside force invading your space and forcing itself upon you. It sometimes feels like it though, huh? They are actually tools that your mind uses to keep you safe. Just like in the garage, you can choose your tool. You can pick up the one that is useful and put those that aren't away. This is mindfulness. When you feel something that you'd prefer not to be feeling, take a step back and analyze it. What is the emotion trying to tell you? Is it an appropriate response to what happened? If it is, accept it and use it. If it isn't, put it down and choose another.

Anxiety, fear and self-doubt are big ones. Your mind goes nuts telling you all sorts of stories about worst case scenarios, how much you're going to look like an idiot, and how much people hate you. You aren't your mind. You aren't your emotions. You have the power to put them aside and think rationally, bringing evidence for why the message that they are sending is total nonsense. There is plenty of evidence to support the fact that the worst case scenario isn't likely to happen, that you won't look like an idiot and that there are plenty of people in this world that would love to have a friend like you.

There is no emotion, except the one that you create. So create peace.

Ignorance and Knowledge

"There is no Ignorance; There is Knowledge"

I don't believe that this line is to be a statement of fact, but rather is the statement of the Jedi's goal. It means that we should approach things from a standpoint of knowledge rather than ignorance.

One of the many things that I'd like to get across to the Jedi is that a Jedi shouldn't make assumptions or judge a thing based completely upon another person's perception. All too often, a person makes up their mind based on the popular view of the crowd. They say that a movie is good or bad based on the rating that it is getting in the newspapers. Even more, they are deciding whether or not to go based upon those ratings. I'll have to admit that some of the best movies I've seen received poor ratings.

My tastes are different from the common crowds. I make up my own mind and make my own decisions and refuse to base them completely upon what another person says because each person has a different perspective and to make an assumption off of what others say is ignorance. Knowledge is first hand.

Let's say that two people meet. They part ways, having a bad impression of one another. One individual tells everyone he meets to not have dealings with the other because he believes that the other is a bad person. - People listen and the other is shunned from the group because he has a lot of influence over the group.

What might have 'really' happened is that both individuals had a bad day. Situations and circumstances of the day let the two to be agitated and disturbed by the other. They weren't working at their best and when they clash together, the friction of two people having a bad day really clashes and things are thrown far out of proportion.

On a normal day, the now shunned individual is a very kind, caring, and even loving person who would give the shirt off his back to help those around him. But he had a bad day and made a few mistakes and was then shunned from the community because the person he ran into had influence and everyone listened to that person of influence.

We should avoid allowing that to happen. We should do our best to understand that we can only see a portion of the picture. If someone tells us that something or someone is not good, we should take and accept their advice - but we should only allow it to take us so far. The real truth needs to be determined first hand. The advice should help us to be more wary and alert so as not to be hurt by the actions of the person - but we may wind up being very surprised at the fact

that today is a new day and what was the truth for one is not necessarily the truth for all. All is a matter of point of view. Knowledge should trump Ignorance.

Further, Knowledge is the goal of the Jedi. We aren't just about seeking to be Knights or Masters for the sake of a title. We are to be on a constant journey of learning and growth. We seek after knowledge - self knowledge is at the core and we build upon that self-knowledge with specialized knowledge that helps us to become the best that we can be.

Master Blaster

The topic of rank often comes up in the Jedi Community. The appropriateness of the use of the Master rank is one that is often discussed and has been brought up again recently. It is a discussion that needs to be had.

What is a Master? Historically speaking, it was a level achieved within a guild after an individual completed their apprenticeship and spent some time as a journeyman. Often the level was awarded when the journeyman presented the guild leadership with their masterpiece, an example of their best work, and the leadership deemed that they had the necessary skill to be considered a master.

Malcolm Gladwell in his book “Outliers: The Story of Success” wrote that ten thousand hours of practice was required to achieve mastery or that it generally takes ten years of practice to become an expert or master. I believe that the number 10,000 is somewhat arbitrary, just an expression that it takes years of practice to develop mastery.

Since we adopted the titles from Star Wars, we might as well look at what was required of them. In ‘Legends’ Expanded Universe, a Jedi began their training as soon as their sensitivity to the force was detected. They would train in groups up until the age of 12 or 13 where they would go through a first set of trials. If they passed those trials they could then be taken as an apprentice for personalized training. They would be trained in this manner until it was felt that they apprentice could pass the trials of knighthood.

Anakin Skywalker was approximately 19 when he was Knighted. Obi-wan Kenobi was 25 when Knighted. Knights weren’t guaranteed elevation to Master and indeed many went on to serve the Jedi Order without ever being elevated higher than Knight. Obi-wan was elevated to Master in order to fill a seat on the Jedi Council. He was 35 at the time. So, it took Obi-wan 23 years from the time he started as an apprentice until he was elevated to Master.

The reality of the Jedi Community is much different than history, modern wisdom, and the fiction. A person is elevated to Master when they’re able to live up to the standard that their training organization established. Since each training organization has different beliefs and focuses, the standards for Knight and Master are wildly varied. There have been organizations that elevate teenagers with less than a year’s worth of training to Master. Then there are those that have such high standards in general that they don’t even have a standard set for Master level because they believe that no one yet is capable of achieving it.

My personal beliefs align more closely to the latter group. I’ll be more conservative and say that it would probably take a person 10 years or more to become a Master, though it is less about time and more about knowledge and experience. In my mind, 10 years automatically disqualifies anyone in the Jedi Community from being a Master. Yes, the community has been around for

nearly 20 years, but it experiences surges in evolution from time to time. The community as it is today looks vastly different than it did 20 years ago. It's last significant shift was around 2008, so we're not quite at the 10 year mark. Next year might mark the 10 year point, but I still don't think that anyone will be qualified to be a Master. There is more evolution and shifting that needs to happen before the community can be considered mature enough to have Masters.

In the past I've tried to justify the use of the Knight and Master title by saying that they are just administrative roles. I believe that is a cheap justification. There are groups that use different titles to denote administrative roles. The reason why the use of Master as a title is so frequently discussed is that it carries specific meaning. A new person joining the community isn't going to look at the title and think 'Oh, they hold a leadership role in their training organization.' No, the word has very specific expectations that come with it. If you have to argue semantics and justify giving a word a different meaning than is commonly understood, something is wrong.

If someone from outside the community sees someone called a Jedi Master they are going to automatically assume that individual has cultivated a high level of knowledge, skill and self discipline. Those within the community have been disabused of that notion after constantly having their expectations crushed. So they settle and become the next wave of expectation crushers.

I believe the misuse of ranks has led to a terrible culture within the community. It's an authoritarian structure. Masters and Knights teach and Apprentices learn. Things like honor, respect and loyalty are taught; often in a manner that makes those out to be just synonyms for obedience. This quickly leads to the development of a persona.

Do you notice how quick Jedi will jump into a 'Master' mode? They are quick to try to teach everyone else how a Jedi should act, what they should or shouldn't do. I'm a master, therefore I must teach. Makes sense if they do it within their own training organization. But if it's just an administrative role, then why not drop it when in a social setting with those not in your training organization? It's a persona. The Knight and Master have to do everything that they can to try to make people believe that they are worthy of that title. Apprentices, wanting to become a Knight and Master, copy the behaviors modeled by their seniors and create their own persona.

I believe that every person who joins the community is looking for a transformative experience. Each one of them has an inner voice that is calling them to be something greater. That is what they want, that is what they expect from the community. Instead, their expectations are crushed and instead of a transformative experience they learn to put on a persona. It creates the culture of mistrust and nasty politics that plague our community.

I want that transformative experience and I want to help others get it too. My first step is to work to strike down all personas that I might wear and present myself as I truly am. I'm just a student on the Jedi path. I'm not above you, I'm right here in the trenches with you. I have my struggles. I have a lot of faults that I need to work on. My goal is not to teach and be in a position of

authority over anyone, but rather to discuss and explore. I don't want to say 'This is how a Jedi should/ought to act' I want to ask 'What does it mean to be a Jedi?' What does it mean to you? I come from a different place than you do. The experience that I want to get from the Jedi Community might be vastly different than what you want to get. So with different needs and different satisfiers for those needs, we will naturally have different focuses. It's foolish to announce that someone isn't a Jedi because they act in a certain way; perhaps they have something else that they need to work on in their personal development that is more pressing than adjusting that behavior. Someone giving voice to their anger might be un-Jedi-like to you, but for them it is very Jedi because they are overcoming their anxiety and becoming more assertive in taking control of their life. Someone may be in the process of taking control of their life and so when they take offense they are expressing that their feelings, their thoughts, and their boundaries are important to them and they are asserting their right to them. You putting on a persona and saying 'You shouldn't act like that' is patronizing because you have no idea what they are going through or where they are coming from. Their actions may be very appropriate for them, as a Jedi.

I believe in and want to be held accountable for my actions; however, if you haven't taken the time to get to know where I am, what my goals are, and the struggles that I face - then you telling me who I should be or what I should be doing could cause a whole lot more harm than good. That's just judgment and criticism. It's patronizing. It makes you look like a pompous jerk instead of the ooby dooby Master that you're trying to look like. Accountability is about a relationship. To hold me accountable you'll have to come off your high horse and get down in the mud with me.

Apprenticeship

In historical apprenticeships, children would be bound to their master for around seven years and would learn the details of the master's craft by assisting him with it. After the training period was over, the apprentice would leave and become a journeyman, traveling around to train under other masters to further hone their skills and earn their living. They'd do this until they created their masterpiece and was judged a master by their guild.

It appears that the fictional Jedi apprenticeships were similar in methodology; at least from the book's standpoint. A youngling would learn the basics up until the age of 12 or 13 where they could be selected as an apprentice by a Jedi Knight and begin a period of training that was about seven years. In that time they would continue to study the basics but would also receive hands-on training as they accompanied and assisted their 'master' on assignments for the Jedi Order.

As people have worked to adapt the Jedi of the fiction to real Jedi, the training method where the student begins in a totally academic setting and then transitions to an apprenticeship, has been adopted by the majority of training organizations.

The Jedi Community is quite young. Like most things in their youth, real Jedi experience frequent growth spurts. What might have been the height of Jedi training at one point could be the fundamental basics some five to ten years later. With quality training programs that take 3 to 5 years to completion and our current stage of development, the Jedi landscape could and should be vastly different from the time a person begins training to the time they complete their training; meaning that the training that they received is now obsolete.

The apprenticeship method is appropriate for the development of skill sets that have been well established and fairly stable for a long period of time. So, in my opinion, the 'traditional' apprenticeship method is inappropriate for the Jedi community's current stage of development.

Yes, I'm just realizing that. I've seen people say it, but I never really 'got it' until just recently. It is not a slight to anyone for me to say that there is no one in the community that is qualified to be a Master in the traditional sense. It's simply the nature of where we are developmentally. Because the concept of Jedi is still being developed, someone that has been here since the beginning is often on the similar footing as someone who has only been here for 5 or 10 years - except that their experience in the community provides extra insight.

Until the Jedi concept experiences a degree of stability for a significant period of time, we need an alternative training paradigm. The solo method and the academic can work for a select few, but the vast majority of people will never complete those programs. The Jedi path isn't academic, it's transformative. Transformation rarely happens through academically impacting a

person's life. We've all gone to school and so we've all experienced what it is like to sit through a lesson and have our eyes glaze over as we zone out. That zoning out doesn't necessarily mean that we find the topic boring, which certainly happens at times, but it could happen for a variety of reasons - lack of quality sleep, hunger, distractions caused by relationship issues or excitement over an upcoming event.

It doesn't matter if there is an instructor providing a lecture or we're reading text; we think faster than someone speaks and faster than we read and so while we're studying, we have an internal conversation going on that is either discussing the information that is being presented or it's going off on it's own tangent thinking about what's for dinner.

Even when we find the topic engaging and are really enjoying the academic process, that engagement doesn't result in transformation. How many times do we read something and think 'Wow, I should really apply this to my life!' We find the subject fascinating and get motivated to follow through and then not. I gotta raise my hand. I've been wanting to become fluent in Spanish. I studied Spanish for three years in high school and then another year in College, but I couldn't carry on a conversation if I was suddenly dumped in Mexico and my life depended upon it. I've taken the time to study techniques to become fluent in a language and even began my exploration of the language, but it eventually tapered off and I'm back where I started.

If you're reading this; it is likely that you've been around the community for a while and know this to be true of Jedi training as well. People get started on a training program and really want to work through it but after a while they just taper off. Not because they don't find the information engaging and interesting, but rather because academics aren't transformative and people seek to become Jedi to experience a transformation.

It's too often that we look at our academic programs as a tool to weed out those that aren't committed to the transformation process. It's a BS concept. We 'leaders' have reasons for this. There aren't nearly as many senior Jedi as there are students so it's a logistical challenge, so we weed them out. Logistics is certainly a valid issue that needs to be considered, but the concept of weeding out people that come to us for help is pretty darn cold.

Yes, the academics provide frameworks to help the student transform their own lives and that there are some that take them and do transform their lives shows that the frameworks are valid; but the fact that most just bounce around from training program to training program shows that people are still looking, that the frameworks alone are not enough. (Note that I'm only referring to those that are sincere about their training, though many might be misguided)

The traditional apprenticeship and academic training methods are authoritarian based. Follow this structure, follow these rules, live to these standards or fail. It'll provide temporary transformation, but isn't lasting. Think about the rules of the road. You're on the highway and in a hurry to get someplace. You might be prone to step on the gas a little bit, ignoring the posted speed limit. When you see a squad car off in the distance, you immediately slow down. Why?

Because of the police officer's authority. Hop in the same car on the same highway, but have your car filled with your significant other, kids, or other loved ones and you are more likely to obey the speed limit. None of those in the car have the authority to enforce the speed limit and write you a ticket; but your desire to be a good role model and keep them safe holds a greater impact than actual authority.

True influence is far superior to authority as a form of power. I suspect that your internal thought processes have already leaped ahead and know exactly where I'm going with this. Namely because I've been saying it for as long as I remember. Hopefully, I'm learning to say it better. The most effective way to bring about transformation is not academic to life, but rather is life to life.

The academic precursor shouldn't be about weeding people out, but rather should be about laying a foundation of trust so that a relationship and true influence is developed. A proper life to life training relationship can not be built until there is a foundation of trust and a good training relationship is more likely to result in transformation.

That actual relationship is key.

Commitment

The Jedi Philosophy provides a path that can give a person direction and purpose in their lives. You, Jedi, stand at the turnoff to that path. Stretched out before your eyes you can see a path that is full of obstacles. There will be hills to climb, walls across the path and areas where the path is very vague. To get to where you want to go is going to require a serious mind. This doesn't mean that you never have fun, but rather that you have dedicated yourself to the journey and aren't taking it lightly. It's not a hobby. It's not a social club. You aren't going to get very far along the path if you treat it as such -- You'll be a shallow Jedi. To get further along is going to require commitment.

Commitment has three stages: The first stage is the Ulysses Pact. In the medical field it is another term for a living will. It's documents that you create that outline what you want to happen to you if you are ever in a situation where you are unable to make choices for yourself in the moment, you'll have made them ahead of time. It is based on the story of Ulysses and his approach to the island of the sirens. He instructed his crew to tie him to the mast of the ship and not untie him no matter what he said or did until they were a certain distance away from the sirens.

For us as Jedi, we make decisions prior to committing ourselves to a course of action that will keep us from breaking the commitment. In general, we can become a clan, where we select a few people that will check in on us and hold us accountable so that we stay committed. In specific cases we make choices ahead of time so that when our commitment is challenged we don't give in to the temptation. If our goal is to cut back on sugar, then we will discard all the sugary snacks in the house and not buy more when we're at the store so that when our commitment level is low and we want a cookie, there won't be any around to eat and so even though we might not be committed in the moment - our pact keeps us from breaking the commitment.

The pact blends nicely into full commitment. When you commit to a course of action, you do everything in your power to remain on the path. When you get a craving for cookies and you can't find any in the house because you've already made the pact; you don't go to the store to get any. You do your best to avoid the Christmas parties that you don't have to attend where you know someone is going to serve the most delicious cookies. Seriously speaking; if you want to quit smoking - when you commit it means that you've made the pact and have thrown away your cigarettes and you've informed your friends, family and coworkers of your intent and encouraged fellow smokers to not lend you a smoke. Then you don't take smoke breaks and go to the smoking areas to 'just talk'. You make a commitment and do everything that you can to keep the commitment and not sabotage your motivation to keep the commitment.

The final stage is recommitment. The Jedi path is a lifelong journey. You can't master the path from the start. You'll work on it piece by piece according to your ability and gradually work in more and more of the path into your life. Invariably you are going to fail. You're not going to behave as you know you ought and you aren't going to do as you know you should. It's inevitable. Instead of beating yourself up and saying (as I've done in the past) I can't do this! You simply pick yourself up and recommit. No need for shame, no need for guilt. Just get back on the path. Life is rough and there will be times that you're knocked off the path. There are going to be obstacles that make it so that you have to sit and wait and really work hard to figure them out. There will be thorny spots that you'll have to push through in order to keep going - and you might be too mentally exhausted in the moment to go through that added pain. You'll have to leave the struggle and go sit on a bench to prepare yourself mentally for the struggle ahead. Then you recommit, get back up and go at it.

Something Special

I understand the study of the Force in the sense that it's exploration provides a degree of self awareness. Being able to reach out and sense the energy that we give out and that we take in is a step towards self discovery - showing us perhaps some of the subtle issues that we face in interacting with others. However, I am of the personal belief that most people seek to manipulate the Force and to gain special powers haven't looked inward enough. They are just looking for the means and methods towards becoming special ... Who hasn't dreamed of being a superhero, able to leap buildings in a single bound and do awesome things for the world?

But the truth of the matter is that no one has really obtained an ability to a significant level to really make a tangible impact on the world around them. Instead, those that do make an impact are those that realize that they are special in their own way and are willing to work hard to make an impact in their sphere of influence.

I remember in 2008 there was a little boy who wondered why they threw out so much food at restaurants. He studied it a little bit and discovered that there were laws in place that would cause serious problems if they gave the food away and someone got sick from it. Because there are so many people that are needy and going hungry within the United States, he felt that these businesses should be allowed to give the food away to homeless shelters and other charity organizations. The issue got taken to the government and the previous law was changed so that businesses could give away the food to the needy without that much fear of prosecution. So, at least within the state of Florida, an 11 year old child brought great change that will help feed the needy.

The point is, it doesn't take supernatural abilities and the use of the paranormal to change the world. It just takes a good idea, courage and persistence. It takes being able to garner influence within your sphere of influence. This is why I focus on developing practical skills and don't pay much attention to 'Force' teachings.

You don't need special powers to be special. You already are. We each have our own knack for some particular skill that we can excel in. We each have such great potential that we can change the lives of so many. The world isn't the place that it could be because people don't realize just how special and important they are. The majority doesn't realize what a significant impact they can and do have on those around them. You alone can make a difference - it just takes a Force of Will (Knowledge, Wisdom, Determination and Persistence).

There may be some great energy field that connects us and binds us all together. I don't believe that it is wrong to try to explore that and figure it out. But I believe that in order to really change the world, we can't wait for the discovery to be made on how to become superhuman - we need to act now and make what changes we can in the now. But that is my opinion!

Selfish Ambition

Philippians 2:3

"Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit"

There are a few beliefs that strike down the concept of ambition as a whole and many might take this to reinforce that idea; however, ambition can be a great thing as long as it's not selfish ambition. I would rather see people strive to be good at what they do than to see a group of people that have no desire to impact the world.

Selfish Ambition is the cause of the majority of problems that we face in the world. Look around at all the various Jedi Organizations. It's a perfect example of this selfish ambition. An individual wants to become a Jedi Knight or Master or Grandmaster and in this selfish ambition begins to develop a rift in the whole concept of Jediism; using manipulation and coercion to bring others to his 'side.' This proceeds until attitudes form that do not allow recognition of other points of views and ideas. Selfish Ambition always divides people, rather than brings them together. Vain Conceit multiplies this problem by making an individual believe that his or her point of view is better or 'more right' than another individual's point of view. The person begins to believe that they are more worthy to hold a position of leadership (such as Master or Grandmaster) because of their conceit.

"But in humility consider others better than yourselves."

The interesting thing is that this concept is the START of true leadership. Being humble doesn't mean that you take on an attitude of 'woe is me' and 'I'm nothing' and always relegate yourself to the position of a follower; it just means that you place others above yourself. You look out for the well-being and growth of others more than you look out for your own well-being and growth. This is the true Jedi way. Too many Jedi are out to gain their own power and develop their own personal self with no regard to those training around them.

Can you imagine a group of people that put their own interests above the interests of those around them? All you will see is the occasional "Hi" as a greeting and then everyone will go back to their own interests. Could this be a problem with us? We don't see much real communication amongst ourselves because it seems that we do not have the humility to consider others better than ourselves. Our own interests and goals are put first. We focus on our own development and our own desire to become a Jedi and don't work enough with our fellows to ensure that they are gaining the training and the development to take the time to communicate with them and see how they are doing on their path to become Jedi.

A true leader is the epitome of humility. They realize that the position of leadership is not a position of power; but that of responsibility. They have to become a servant of others - working to ensure that those that they 'lead' have their interests served and are allowed to grow at their own pace and time. They hold the best interests of their 'followers' at heart and put them over their own interests. But again this doesn't mean that they allow themselves to be a doormat and be walked all over. Sometimes it is in the best interest of the individual to be corrected. How many of us are willing to risk offending one another to ensure that correction is offered? How many of us truly care one for another in such a way that we put their growth first and are willing to help them in all aspects at, perhaps, the expense of our own growth?

We are Jedi. This quote is what defines who we are trying to become. I realize that I have problems with this area and I'm working to correct those problems and ensure that you all receive the instruction, direction and support that you need in order to grow.

Improve the Silence

"Before you speak, ask yourself. Is it kind, is it necessary, is it true, does it improve on the silence?"

I believe that the issues in this statement are too subjective to consider before speaking or writing.

Kindness is a matter of perspective. After he got in trouble at school, I took over the responsibility of teaching my nephew what he needs to learn in order to survive in life. There are many times when I have to mark him wrong and tell him to do his work over again. Quite often when I tell him to go back and redo his work he tells me that I'm being mean. Is it mean to ensure that he learns his lesson or is it kind?

Here's another analogy: There are times when someone will approach me and will bluntly tell me that I don't have any sense at all when it comes to something that I've said or done. I could get offended at their statements and claim that they are being mean. Instead I look upon this type of correction as the ultimate act of kindness. How can one learn if one is not corrected? A fool despises correction while a wise person loves it. It's a matter of perspective.

Is it necessary? Again that is a matter of perspective. There is much that one can say that might not be totally necessary to the topic at hand, but is considered necessary by another who wishes to get to know the character and substance of a person. Indeed, only saying what is necessary will provide very efficient conversation but it will leave the conversation cold and impersonal.

Is it true? For the third time it is a matter of perspective. As Obi-Wan said to Luke - Truth depends on your point of view. Darth Vader did murder and betray Anakin and yet Vader and Anakin are the same person. It all depends on the point of view.

Does it improve upon the silence? There is a saying that silence is golden and I can tell you that after spending the past two weeks in close quarters with my nephew that is certainly true. I rarely have a moment of peace because he's always babbling or whining about something... Yet is silence always golden? There is a time and a place for activity and conversation. The Jedi Community is one such place. This is an organization where the purpose is to learn and to help one another realize their full potential. That can't be done in silence.

Ultimately it depends on the writer's intent and perspective. The reader can take it with a different spirit.

Just Commit: A Parable

"Jedi Arvil, you're up." Master Frost beckoned the young Jedi into the antechamber.

Arvil walked forward nervously. While the younglings waited they discussed what they might expect. Some said it was a lightsaber duel, others said that it was a test of skill in the force. It was obvious that it was all conjecture. The details of the trial were kept secret. No one knew.

The door of the antechamber slammed shut loudly being Arvil. He had been so lost in his thoughts, playing out scenario after scenario in his head of what might be expected of him that the loud bang caused him to jump.

Master Frost gave him a kind smile, and placed a blackout helmet over Arvil's head. Arvil struggled to calm down as the sound of his breathing echoed in the darkness of the helmet.

He felt a hand take him by the elbow and lead him into the main chamber. The hand withdrew from his arm, making him feel oddly cold and disconnected as he heard the sound of footsteps retreating back the way they came.

Arvil waited. Listening for the sound of a lightsaber igniting or footsteps or anything that might indicate what he was supposed to be doing. Nothing.

"There is no emotion; there is peace. There is no emotion; there is peace..." Arvil repeated the code over and over, trying to get his nerves and his breathing under control.

When he was finally centered he reached out with the force, heightening his senses, 'looking' for any sign of movement, any indication at all that would help him pass the test. He sensed Master Frost in the Antechamber and his fellow younglings in the hallway beyond, but nothing else.

He waited. And waited. Still nothing.

After what seemed to be an hour, he removed the helmet and looked around the chamber for a clue. It was just a normal athletic chamber, wide open floors for practicing dulons and velocities.

Confused and feeling defeated he made his way back to the antechamber and approached Master Frost.

"I don't understand, Master. What am I supposed to do? Was this a test of patience or perseverance? How can I pass a test if I don't know what I'm supposed to do?"

"It wasn't a test. Just an object lesson. Not having been given instruction, eventually you had to make a choice for yourself what to do. You've come to us to be a Jedi. We can provide you with knowledge and develop your skill, but in many areas you have to decide for yourself what it means to be a Jedi and choose a course of action and commit to it. Commitment to a course of action is far more important than confidence in a course of action."

A Jedi look at the Sith Code

Peace is a Lie, There is only passion
Through passion, I gain strength
Through strength, I gain power
Through power, I gain victory
Through victory, my chains are broken
The force shall free me.

Peace is a lie

Peace is a lie, it simply doesn't exist. Yes, we've all felt moments in our life where there was a certain stillness and it was a pleasure to dwell within that moment - but it is because peace is a lie that we can't live our whole lives in this state.

The truth is, life is conflict and we need conflict. Too many people have developed the mindset that conflict is a negative thing and seek to avoid it. There is no such thing as absolute peace. Instead, so that we can claim to have this peace we have to redefine it as the framework in which conflict is resolved in a constructive manner. The conflict will still exist no matter what.

We are all about conflict. Our goal is to create conflict within ourselves so that we have the opportunity to grow. Growth and development is at the heart of what we do and we can not have said growth and development if we make peace with who we are. We need, the world needs, conflict in order to make progress.

If peace were true, then why are you a Jedi? Aren't you at peace with just being yourself? Even as a Jedi, why do you pursue growth? Should you be at peace with who you are and your lack of knowledge and development and just accept them? Instead, you fight your ignorance, you fight your lack of self knowledge - you create internal conflict because you want to be something else. Yet we're at peace with that.

There is only passion

Instead of just accepting your place in the world, you are here training to be a Jedi because you have developed a passion for something - you've developed this intense desire to study and challenge yourself so that you have the opportunity to grow.

If you didn't have this intense passion, you would be like the majority of the world that chooses to live their life in a rut, getting locked into the habitual cycle of moving through the day without accomplishment and without growth.

It is because of your passion that you are here. It is because of a call burning within that causes you to seek out instruction and difficult training so that you are challenged to be more than what you are. Why else would you give so much energy and so much time to something that much of the world would laugh at you for doing? Why else would you work to achieve something and consider it meaningful when being a Jedi holds no value in the real world and would actually detract your value to many. But it means something to you, there is something (passion) that motivates you to work towards it.

Through passion, I gain strength

Our passion to be something more drives us to work to achieve that thing which we are passionate about. For Jedi the passion is helping others, gaining skills that make one unique, or simply personal growth. But passion only serves as the fuel. Just as a car would remain in one place, even if it had a full tank and no engine; we too would remain in place.

Our passion provides the fuel and it is our discipline and strength that give us the ability to move forward. We create a plan of action. We develop the self-awareness to understand the steps that are required in becoming the person that we want to become and reaching the goals that we want to reach. We have weighed the options for and against our desire and this gives us the strength to move forward.

Through strength, I gain power

Our passion, mixed with strength empowers us. We have the fuel, we have the engine and so we begin to move forward. Constant work and study gives us more skill, knowledge and wisdom to propel ourselves even further forward. Not only are we empowered to become more than what we are, we develop the power needed to achieve that goal.

We put ourselves into the right mindset. We dedicate our focus and energy towards things that will ensure that we reach our goal. We go through periods of small successes and failures that help us to adjust so that we make the most efficient use of our resources and energy. If we are wise, we surround ourselves with like-minded individuals that we can draw support from as well as support them so that we achieve both stability and gain influence so that if we fall we don't quite fall so far.

Through power, I gain victory

As we continue to grow in power, knowledge, wisdom and influence we will eventually achieve victory. We will accomplish things that others might think were impossible. We might achieve something that others laughed at us for even daring to contemplate. Our dreams and our ideals may have made us outcasts, but we fought through them and with proper planning, growth,

development and influence we can reach our goals and achieve small victories at first, but small victories can lead to greater victories.

Through victory, my chains are broken

I have achieved victory, I've reached a goal and now I'm even more empowered. I realized a part of my potential and now understand that my potential is limitless. There is nothing that I can not do if I put the proper effort and energy into it. I'm not bound/restrained by other's concepts of whether my dream is attainable or not. I'm not bound by my own limited imagination or perspective. I have gained a greater self awareness so that I can move from one paradigm to another, ever growing and achieving new heights. I have been freed. There is no glass ceiling, there is no one holding my back - not even myself.

The Force has set me free

By the force of my will, I have been freed from limitations and freed myself from all sources of control except those that I personally accept for myself. I know that I am free to become who and what I want to be because no one can stop me unless I allow them to stop me.

Self User Manual

Have you ever heard the saying "Children don't come with a user manual"? It would be nice if they did, don't you think? I know the first thing I'd look up is either the off button or the mute.

It might be just a fantasy to get an instruction manual for a kid, where we can have all the right answers in front of us for how to give them the best life and help them to reach their fullest potential as adults; but it doesn't have to be a fantasy for us.

Write your own user manual.

Consider it a type of self-reflection and meditation. What information does another Jedi, a co-worker, and/or a family member need to know in order to get the best results when interacting with you.

What is your personality? Take several of the different types of personality tests and see what they have to say about your personality. How do you need people to engage with you? What needs to happen in order for you to feel loved or appreciated?

Next, consider your personal strengths and weaknesses. What can people rely on you for? What are you passionate about? What bores you? What are your quirks and defects?

What about your circadian rhythms? What is the best time of day for others to approach you? Are you a morning person or are you dangerous to be around until after noon?

If you wish to bring others in on the project, complete a 360 degree survey or a Johari Window test to demonstrate how you see yourself differs from how others see you.

Have fun with it and see what you come up with. You might learn a little bit about yourself and help others to understand you better.

Right Focus

I was visiting my extended family when my grandfather collapsed right in front of me. I froze. Thankfully I was surrounded by family, some of whom were nurses and knew exactly what to do. In my dismay, I realized that I needed to do something so that I would never be in that situation again. It took several years but I wound up choosing the Jedi path because it was all about developing the mindset and skills so that a person could and would react properly when in the midst of such a situation.

A few days ago, over a decade later, that training was put to the test. A scream rang out and I leaped into action. I called 911 and then assisted in performing CPR until the paramedics arrived. It worked. The paramedics applied an AED which advised that no shock was recommended because a weak pulse had been found.

I would love to be able to write in a dispassionate manner about this; but I think you would fail to grasp the enormity of the situation. The woman screaming for help was my mother and the man lying on the floor was my father. My father is my hero; everything that I hope and strive to be, he was. He was a great source of strength and yet was humble. He was a man of authority and yet only lead with loving kindness. Words simply can not express the amount of love and respect that I have for him.

So as you can imagine; to hear that scream and to be in that situation, I was emotionally overwhelmed. And yet I acted. The doctor commented that we (my youngest brother and I) did everything right. My training paid off in the short run ... It is a great tragedy that my father died nearly 10 hours later due to complications from the heart attack. I share that to express just how seriously I take what I'm saying.

The core of being a Jedi MUST be practical application. Concern yourself first with dealing with the potential tragedies that you may face in life. The immediate threats to your health and well-being as well as those of your family and friends should be at the top of your list to train for. First Aid, CPR, Disaster Preparedness and Self Defense. Without knowing these things and being able to help yourself and help others when people need help the absolute most; you're NOT a Jedi. Being an EMT, Police Officer, Soldier or other profession that deals with emergencies might not be your chosen path to serve your community. It's great if you can serve in a capacity where you do what you're good at; such as IT or being an artist -- and hopefully that is the only capacity where you might serve. However, the truth of the matter is that if you don't provide IT services, If you aren't changing lives through your art, or if you're not serving in the military or as a paramedic -- someone else will be. There are plenty of people that are doing those things either professionally or as volunteers. However, in an emergency, it is a lot more likely that YOU will be the ONLY person that can make a difference and make a difference by

saving and protecting lives. The emergency MUST be your priority and become the starting point for your journey as a Jedi.

After you've got your initial training in how to protect and serve in an emergency; your next step should be about learning how to build interpersonal relationships. Again; it will be great if you can be an IT professional, Artist or even in Rescue services -- but that is far from being the most important thing -- the quality of your life and how to impact people on a personal level is profoundly important. Developing good communication skills, leadership traits, and emotional intelligence is how you'll really make a difference. Being a Jedi starts in the home. What is your relationship with your mother, father, spouse, siblings or children? If you can't touch their lives and be a help to them -- physical help as well as being a source of comfort, strength, love, and support -- then how do you expect to really impact others outside the home? These skills will improve the quality of your life and everyone that comes into contact with you; family, friends, coworkers and the rest of your community.

A study of philosophy and religion is what defines the path as being specifically Jedi. You can do the first two steps and not be a Jedi; but the reverse isn't true. You can't just look at the philosophy and explore, debate and pontificate about what it means to be a Jedi and then not actually put the philosophy in action and still be a Jedi. The philosophy will lead you to the first two steps and you must practice them diligently or you simply aren't a Jedi, but rather a pretender. Any path that leads you in a different direction is just an excuse. I think everyone knows in their heart what they should be doing, but simply don't rise to the challenge. You may do that and call yourself a Jedi; but you're just a fraud.

It is only after proficiency with Emergency, Interpersonal and Philosophic training that the other aspects of Jedi training should be explored. Now, mind you, those areas of training will never end. You must continue to work at them and practice them because otherwise, those skills will deteriorate and you'll be right back to just being a Jedi in name and not in deed. Things like exploring how to use the force, training in the martial arts (vs. Emergency's self defense), and other skills are of lesser importance -- though they may wind up dominating your training and how you live as a Jedi. It is in this area that you will train to serve others in IT, Art or Emergency services (among many others). They are important and will define your journey; but they are less important than being prepared for tragedy and how you interact with others.

The principle of ‘with’

In American Kenpo Karate there is a principle of ‘with’, where multiple movements are done simultaneously in order to minimize wasted motion and use time more efficiently. Similarly, Chef Alton Brown frequently shows a disdain for kitchen utensils that are single purpose, as they tend to clutter up the kitchen. It’s better to have a utensil that serves multiple purposes.

I believe that this principle can be used by Jedi in order to become more impactful.

If you want exercise, how can you do something that is physically demanding while also being of service to your household, neighborhood or community? Instead of going to the gym, perhaps you could rake leaves, mow the grass, or shovel snow for an elderly person or help a neighbor move.

How might you apply the principle of ‘with’ in all of your Jedi daily practices?

Study with intention

When reading a book, taking a course, or reading lectures from your Jedi training, don't just quickly consume the material. Just going through the book, course, or lecture will only provide you with surface level information that you're likely to quickly forget.

Slow down and take notes on the important points that are being presented. Analyze those points and determine how they can be applied to your life. Then, don't just accept it as true.

Make your life a science experiment where you give yourself daily or weekly quests where you put the knowledge to the test and collect data to determine if the theory that you were presented with was true.

Make journaling a daily habit. Debrief yourself on whether or not you had the opportunity to test the theories and what the results were if the opportunity did arise. Ultimately, you want to determine if the knowledge has had a practical and positive impact on your life and be able to back that up with solid data.

Cultivate the garden of your mind.

In every circumstance; decide what kind of seed that you intend to plant. Will you choose to plant a good seed or will you plant a weed?

When you do something that doesn't meet your own hopes and expectations, how you respond to the situation plants a seed. If you beat yourself up and you affirm your negative self-talk, you plant a weed. If you look at the situation as an opportunity to learn, and reject your negative self-talk and counter with self-compassion and forgiveness, you plant a good seed.

When you interact with a person who is hurt and is angry with you or critical of you, how you respond to them plants two seeds.

The first seed is the seed that you plant in your garden. You can choose to take on their hurt as your own and plant a weed, or you can transmute their pain with compassion and forgiveness and plant a good seed.

The second seed that you plant is their garden. If you respond with anger, bitterness and resentment, you are offering them weeds to plant in their garden. If you respond with compassion and understanding, you are offering them a good seed. Understand that whatever seed you choose to offer them, they have the choice to take it and accept what is offered or transmute it, just the same as you have a choice. So you may respond with kindness and compassion and they can transmute that into a weed. You are not responsible for that.

In the end, your garden is more likely to produce more of whatever you plant. If you plant weeds, your mind will become overgrown with hurt. If you plant good seed, you'll produce good fruit that will empower you and those around you.

Choose with wisdom

In life there is no certainty. If you wait until you are certain about what to choose, you never will. You don't have to know what to do, just make a choice and start moving. It's better to choose wrong and move than it is to not make a choice and remain stagnant.

In making decisions; avoid those choices that only provide a limited gain, but have a long term cost. It's not worth it. Unfortunately, most people do choose immediate gratification at the expense of their future.

For example; As a Jedi you might be faced with the option to choose a training program that is hard but is more certain to transform you into the Jedi that you want to be or a training program that will provide a quick path to a title or position.

Getting Knighted quickly isn't worth it. The title won't grant you extra wisdom or access to secret knowledge. It just places more expectation and responsibility on your shoulders. We all have heard the story of the butterfly trying to escape the cocoon. You are like that butterfly. You need the struggle of your training in order to become a Knight. Reject any option that promises a fast track or seems easy. Choose the struggle.

Dealing with criticism

When faced with harsh criticism for the work that you're doing, ask yourself whether your critic has created a body of work that you respect and admire. If they haven't, their criticism doesn't matter.

There is a saying that the tallest nail gets hammered down or the tallest poppy is cut down. If you stand out, people will criticize you and you'll feel pressure to conform with the crowd. Jedi aren't meant to conform to the crowd, but rather they are meant to train hard and long so that they can put themselves in a position where they are able to reach down and pull others up higher.

Dealing with criticism is difficult. But be objective about the feedback that you're given. Is the person that is giving the criticism qualified to be giving it?

For example; If you are being criticized for your writings, has your critic written something that you respect and admire? If not, then they aren't qualified enough to make you stop writing. If your character is being criticized, do you respect and admire your critic for their character? Don't allow someone who has chosen to remain in mediocrity force you to conform with them.

Criticism can be invaluable to help you grow into a better Jedi; but good criticism tends to come from a place of safety, where you are certain that the person has your best interests at heart and has the skill and experience in what you're doing to provide suggestions for how you could improve.

You are your own gatekeeper. You get to decide who has a say.

Jedi seek continual improvement

“When the facts change, I change my mind - what do you do, sir?” - John Maynard Keynes

“Teaching was a cornerstone of the Order, the sharing of knowledge nearly as important as protecting life.” - Vernestra Rwoh, Out of the Shadows

Learning and sharing knowledge are an important part of Jedi Philosophy. So much so that I would dare to say that if you aren’t working to learn something, you aren’t a Jedi. Might be a little bit of gatekeeping there, but “There is no ignorance; there is knowledge” and “Jedi seek to improve themselves through knowledge and training,” both core parts of the Jedi Philosophy seem to be in agreement with assertion. These aren’t “Learn something until you get to a certain point and then stop.” They are statements of an ongoing process.

A Jedi is always seeking to improve their knowledge.

If you are doing and teaching the same thing that you were doing a decade or more ago, something has gone wrong. Review and refine your practices. Update your methodology and technology to remain current.

The only constant is change. As we learn more about the world around us, even science and facts change. As new and more in depth information becomes available, do you take the time to seek it out and change your approach based on that new information?

How willing are you to change your mind and your methods?

Challenge tradition

“This is the way we’ve always done it” is not a good justification for continuing to do it. Be willing to challenge procedure, traditions and even culture.

There are a lot of Jedi who have come from a military or martial arts background which tend to have a very authoritarian structure. That structure was adopted into the Jedi Realist culture and has resulted in attitudes where people who’ve been around for a long time and/or been promoted to the rank of Knight and Master feel entitled to a certain degree of deference.

Is that attitude in alignment with the Jedi Philosophy? How would someone who is truly following the Jedi Philosophy, believing in service over ruling others, behave?

We must all examine our lives and our organizations to ensure that the procedures, traditions and culture are created in alignment with the philosophy we wish to espouse and reduce the chances that the procedures, traditions and cultures are what is shaping the philosophy.

Begin the work that future generations will complete.

You don’t need to see the completion of a project. Your task is to get it started. Your community faces problems that were quick to create, but may take generations to repair. Just because you won’t see it to completion doesn’t mean that the work shouldn’t begin. Take a 100 year view and lay the foundation that future generations will build upon.

Be willing to show up muddy.

We all have our personal dirt; the hurts and traumas and problems that we carry with us every day. We hide it because we're afraid that we'll be rejected for our imperfections. We're encased in our mud and it hinders our movement. The path to peace and harmony is through truth.

That thing that you're scared to share? Share it. It might be a hard and painful road, but at least as you travel that road you'll have a peace of mind and a freedom to be yourself.

Create boundaries.

Boundaries aren’t an attempt to change a person. You can’t control what anyone thinks, says or does. So if you set boundaries expecting others to change -- that’s manipulation and not setting boundaries.

Setting boundaries means making a request. You are asking to be treated in a certain way. They have the right to decline your request. That is their choice. It’s your choice whether you continue to engage with them any more.

Setting boundaries isn’t to be used to manipulate or punish someone for not correcting their behavior. Again, the goal is not to change anyone or to force your priorities on them and set expectations for anyone else’s behaviors. Boundaries are about you and you alone.

People don’t generally go out of their way to be rude or otherwise hurt other people. They act and make requests in a manner that is rational to them. If their behavior is not rational to you, it just means that you’re following a different rulebook and that’s perfectly valid.

When your boundaries are crossed, stick to them. Disengage for your own sake, so that you can remain a person of integrity. If you set boundaries and then remain engaged, they aren't really boundaries.

Times change.

People change, technology changes, culture changes. As a Jedi, it is your job to keep up with change. The things that worked 5 years ago may no longer work now. The things that work now might not work next year. Jedi have to keep their eyes and ears wide open so that they can be aware of the changes that are happening in people, in technology, and in their organization. Then they have to adapt to serve the current needs. Beyond that, they must be forward looking to see what changes may come in the future and try to get ahead of the change and be the first to adopt new practices that will keep them on the cutting edge.

Jedi, what does your community need? Ask them to find out, don't just assume.

You can’t give what you don’t have.

Being a Jedi is about serving others, but it has to start with yourself. You can’t provide to others what you don’t have yourself. A good many Jedi want to serve the world by developing others, by reaching out a hand and lifting people up. Well, if you want to develop others, you have to start by developing yourself. Do you have an intentional plan to do that?

No matter where you are on the hierarchical ladder of Jedi training; novice or master, you need to have an intentional training plan for yourself. Neither Master nor your organization should be creating it for you. You are the only you. You are the only one that can look at your life and see where your talents and interests converge. Only you know your flaws, weaknesses, and other areas that you need to develop.

How do you want to serve others? What impact do you want to have on the world? That’s the place to start. What skills, knowledge and experience do you need to be able to serve in that manner and to make that impact?

Jedi Intent + (Self Control) + Jedi Action = Jedi Outcome

Opie Macleod teaches the Jedi Method; Jedi Intent + Jedi Action = Jedi Outcome.

Most people have good intentions.

We don't generally go through life trying to figure out how to mess up our life and the lives of others. The majority of what we do and even the majority of problems that we cause had good intentions. But Jedi Intent doesn't automatically mean that we take Jedi Action. That plus sign between Jedi Intent and Jedi Action is Self-Control.

I'm the best example that I can think of for someone who has the best intentions, but screws up royally when it comes to taking action. I'm impulsive, at times, and act too quickly without being mindful of how the actions that I take are more in alignment with my attitude and not necessarily my values. I have moments of immaturity, where I feel pressure and just act to escape that pressure instead of acting from a state of serenity and in harmony with my values.

The correction that I need and the connection that we all need to have between Jedi Intent and Jedi Action is Self-Control. Slow down and look at the situation from all angles, mindful of all the different outcomes that could result, making sure that the action that we take is in alignment with our values and the Jedi Philosophy.

Dream scary dreams

Create a dream that is so big that it's scary. Make it so big that when you look at it you get stressed out because you have no idea how you're going to make it reality.

If your dream isn't causing you some distress, then your dreams and plans are too small. They aren't going to force you far enough outside of your comfort zone. The world needs your light, so plan to shine as bright as possible!

Imagine what you could achieve in ten years! You don't have to know what it takes to get there, you just have to know the next step to take. That step will help you figure out the next step.

When you dream big, big problems shrink. Those big dreams inspire others to join and support you. However, be clear about your dream. If you take on partners and they have a different vision for how to fulfill your dream, then you have no vision.

Don't give so much weight to the nagging doubt in the back of your head that says that your goal isn't realistic. That's just pessimism wearing a more palatable mask. Listen to the voice inside you that says 'I can be more.' or 'I can do more.'

You have it within you to achieve great things!

Pursue adversity

How willing are you to pursue and face adversity? What risks are you willing to take to achieve your dreams? What sacrifices are you willing to make?

It's better to face disappointment, rejection and outright failure than to not try at all.

You are not entitled to success. You're not entitled to the rank of Knight or Master. You're not entitled to having people interested in learning from you. You gain these things by facing adversity. You gain them by facing disappointment and experiencing failures.

You aren't owed success. Your order isn't required to do everything in its power to keep you around, make sure that you can do the work, and promote you to Knight. That is the work that you have to do.

Then, once you've worked on yourself, you have to serve. Do you want people to respect you as a Knight or Master? Then you have to produce a body of work that is worthy of respect. I'm not necessarily talking about teachings. How you serve your community and the Jedi community depends on your skills and talents; but you have to serve. If you appreciate what your Masters and Order has done for you, then show that appreciation through serving. But again, all that work doesn't entitle you to success. It doesn't entitle you to recognition. You have to be willing to feel used and unappreciated. It's the service that matters, not the recognition that you get from it.

What do you value?

One way to identify some of your personal values is to think about the things that you're against. What upsets you? For example; seeing food left uneaten, or going moldy in the refrigerator or in the cabinet might upset you more than it does the average person.

Identify your pet peeves: These little things can identify things that you're strongly against. The inverse may be a Value; like if people telling white lies is a pet peeve, then you strongly value honesty. However, it may be that your value is just against that, like the example of food waste.

After you determine what you're against; think about how you can mitigate those things.

Perhaps it's your values that need to be adjusted. Forcing kids to clean their plates even when they aren't hungry is probably going to teach them to overeat and cause health problems in the future. So, you might need to be mindful of your values and how they can impact your attitude, so that you can take that into consideration with how you treat other people.

Using the food waste issue as an example; you can also mitigate the issue by being more careful of what you buy and making sure that you only buy what you intend to use, keeping track of what you've bought and being sure to prepare the right amount without having leftovers that sit around too long.

Live in integrity

On the Jedi Path, there is no such thing as ‘putting it in neutral.’ You either do something today that moves you forward on the path, or you put it in reverse and have set backs.

Maintaining daily practices, such as meditating, eating right, and exercising may seem like you’re not really doing anything to take a step toward being the Jedi that you want to become, but you actually are. You’re building discipline and creating positive habits -- setting a precedent for what you’re more likely to do tomorrow and the next day. Especially if you do those things when you don’t feel like it.

Giving in to the feeling of ‘I don’t feel like it’ does the opposite. It’s the first day of creating a habit where ‘don’t feel like it’ is a good enough excuse. You’re indicating that your emotional state is what is in control. That listening to your feelings is more important than the goals that you’ve set.

If that is truly the case, if your feelings are more important than your goals, then you need to set goals that hold greater values.

If it’s not the case, live in integrity! Put your feelings aside and pursue your values.

This isn’t to say that you should beat yourself up when you miss a day … or two … or twenty.

What is done is done, there is no point in looking back and feeling shame and guilt for it, except as a signal of what your true values are.

If you don’t do your daily practices or anything else to move you toward some goals, if you’re not interested in developing yourself through knowledge and training, and are perfectly happy with that -- then that’s okay. Not everyone is meant to be a Jedi. Your values aren’t in alignment with the Jedi Philosophy and that’s perfectly valid. There are many philosophies to choose from. You need to find the one that is true.

Though, I’d like to make a point that it is okay to take a day off. Jedi are intentional about what they do and taking some time to rest and recover so that they are able to keep going is of great importance. However, it must be done intentionally -- perhaps even scheduled -- rather than just deciding today that you don’t feel like it and so you won’t. Take care of yourself by taking breaks, but don’t let yourself be controlled by your emotions and ruin any progress that you’ve made.

Living your philosophy is a matter of personal integrity. If you are a Jedi and wish to live by the Jedi Philosophy and you’ve determined that meditation, service, and training are part of how a

Jedi lives -- and then you don't do those things, you're not living in integrity with your own philosophy.

It doesn't matter that you didn't tell anyone that you planned to meditate for 10 minutes today, were going to walk a mile, eat right, and write in your journal for 30 minutes.

When you don't do those things you aren't lying to anyone else, but you are lying to yourself. Keep making and then breaking such plans and soon you'll find that you don't trust yourself.

Has that ever happened before? You want to lose weight or write a book or achieve some other goal and you start, but don't maintain the behaviors required to achieve that goal. Soon you start to think 'What's the point of trying? I always fail anyway!'

That's your lack of trust in yourself. Your self-esteem in that context is shot because you know you lack integrity. You don't believe that you have the capability of being the person that you want to be.

Strive to live in integrity. Don't set massive goals and doom yourself to failure from the start. Just do something each day that moves you in the direction of being the person that you want to be. It doesn't have to be big. It just has to be a step forward. One step. Meditating for one minute. Reading one page or even one paragraph in that book that you've been meaning to read. Writing 100 words. One small step.

What's your step for today?

Jedi training is an infinite game

Simon Sinek talks about how businesses mess up because they think in finite ways about the infinite game. If you meet your sales goals at the end of the quarter, it doesn't mean that the job is over and you have to go find another job. No, you keep trying to sell your product. It's an infinite game. What if you don't make your sales goals at the end of the quarter? In the long run, does it matter? The same thing happens, you try to make more sales in the next quarter. It's an infinite game.

We can apply this to being a Jedi. Don't get trapped in a finite mindset. The finite mindset is "I want to become a Jedi Knight" and it's the pursuit of that title that drives you forward. Does anything end when you become a Jedi Knight? No, it's an infinite game. The practices that you've developed in working to become a Knight need to continue.

So forget the titles. It's fine if you use them; but don't let them be your drive. Play the infinite game. Don't think "I want to be a Knight." Instead think about the person that you want to become. Who do you want to be? Do you want to be kinder? Do you want to be more courageous? Do you want to be more mindful? Let that be the foundation of your training.

How can I be more kind today? How can I be more courageous? How can I be more mindful?

When you make mistakes and aren't, for example, as kind, courageous or mindful as you hoped to be, don't beat yourself up. Your failures don't define you unless you refuse to take responsibility for them. It's an infinite game, you just continue to try to become better.

Every day, from today until the day you're transformed into the Force -- you have more that you can do, you have improvements that you can make to your character. It's an infinite game.

The real currency is connection

Connecting with other people is the most important thing that you do every day.

In the business world, people are far more likely to get promoted based on who they know and how well they know them. You want to move up in the organization? You have to have a good relationship with your coworkers and your bosses. You have an even better chance if you have a mentor that gives you access to their network.

In personal health, you're more likely to go to the gym if you go with a partner. You're more likely to achieve goals when you have an accountability partner.

On the negative side of things, loneliness causes high blood pressure, anxiety, depression, weakened immune system, and cognitive decline. I've heard it said that the impact of loneliness on your health is about the same as smoking 15 cigarettes per day.

A fundamental human need is the need for love and respect. We need relationships. We need connection. We need a sense of belonging.

As a Jedi, we must go a step beyond. We don't just serve our own needs, we serve others. So part of being a Jedi is the creation of communities where people can get together and talk about the things that are important to them without feeling judged. Create connection without agenda, where no one is there trying to prove that they are worthy of being a Knight or Master or Grandmaster, no one is looking for their next apprentice or their next master. Just people connecting for the sake of connecting.

Who will you connect with today?

Who are your biggest influences?

Motivational speaker Jim Rohn said we are the average of the five people we spend the most time with. This makes sense. We are influenced by the people and things that we spend time with. The more opportunity that someone or something can speak into your life, the more it is going to have an impact on you and the more you are going to become like it.

Who are your five people?

Books, social media and news count. If you spend a lot of time surfing social media, how are you becoming more like it?

Do the people and information sources that you surround yourself with have traits that you want to adopt? If not, what can you do to change your environment and spend time around people who will influence you to become who you want to be?

Make more decisions

Successful people make more decisions; they are decisive and spend less time hesitating or in analysis paralysis. They realize that poor decisions move them toward their goals far quicker than indecision.

Make bad decisions. When you make the wrong decision you're providing yourself with a learning opportunity. Procrastinating in your decision making probably won't reveal more information. When you have small decisions to make, use logic. With the big decisions, trust your instincts.

Budget your resources for Jedi training

“Jedi seek to improve themselves through knowledge and training.”

When people create budgets they are very quick to budget for entertainment and for eating out, but rarely for their own self-improvement. If you have a huge collection of lightsaber hilts and Jedi robes, if you buy every Star Wars game or Lego set that is released, but never save up money to take a class or buy books so that you can “develop yourself through knowledge and training”, you are a Star Wars fan and not a Jedi.

I know that’s some serious gatekeeping there; but it’s like claiming to be Christian and not believing in Christ, or a Taoist and not seeking harmony with nature … a principle tenet of the Jedi is to pursue knowledge. Granted, there is plenty of training that you can get for free -- but if being a Jedi is a deeply held philosophical belief, you’ll be willing to spend your time, money and energy in the pursuit of knowledge and training.

You are not in control.

The only things you can control are your thoughts, emotions and actions. Any desire to control anything else will bring frustration and anger.

There is no perfect recipe that is guaranteed to bring you success every time.

Imagine baking a cake. You've used that recipe several times before and it's always worked. So, you follow it exactly as you have before and are surprised when the cake comes out overcooked. There are always elements that you can't control. Maybe the oven didn't heat evenly or one of the ingredients was bad.

No matter how good your intent or how many times you've taken a particular action; you have no control over the outcome. You have to be willing to accept that your actions may not immediately produce the results that you want, but may have an impact later on.

If you have to have a specific outcome every time; if you act like that is something that is in your control, you're going to be miserable. Focus more on just moving in the right direction.

Remain in the present

“Don’t center on your anxieties, Obi-Wan. Keep your concentration here and now, where it belongs.” - Qui-Gon Jinn

Anxiety comes when you concentrate too much on what could go wrong in the future.

Depression comes when you concentrate too much on what has already gone wrong in the past.

Keep your attention on living in the present moment.

If you find yourself mentally moving too much into the past or future, ground yourself in the present by asking yourself ‘Where am I right now?’

Start with your body. Gain control of your breathing by taking deep calming breaths. Then do a body scan and acknowledge and accept how you feel physically. Take note of any pain and discomfort. Not feeling comfortable in your body means that you’ve not taken the time to get to know yourself. Treat your body as a dear friend; with acceptance and without judgment. In this moment, it is neither too much nor is it too little. It is the reality of the moment. So, take the time to get to know yourself. When you feel pain or discomfort, ask ‘what are you trying to say?’ Discomfort is a teacher that teaches us when and how we need to change.

Then do an emotional scan. Acknowledge and accept how you are feeling emotionally. Take note of your emotions. Your emotions are not right or wrong, light or dark, good or evil. They are a signal. So ask your emotions ‘what are you trying to say?’ Your emotions are also an indicator of how and when we need to change.

Finally, do a mental scan. What were you thinking of that took you out of the present moment? Accept those thoughts without judgment. Your anxiety and depression isn’t bad or wrong, it’s your mind’s attempt to keep you safe. Ask your mind ‘what are you trying to say?’ Your thoughts indicate your values and beliefs. When your thoughts focus on past or future events, what does it indicate that you want to avoid? What does that indicate about your beliefs and values?

Ultimately, the answers that you receive will tell you what you need to focus on in the moment, what you can actually control, that will help you become the person that you want to become.

You’re too content

Why don’t you have more discipline? Because you’re too content with where you’re at. If you weren’t okay with being the person that you were being and doing the stuff that you do day in and day out, you’d find the discipline to change. If you sit on a tack or step on a lego brick; you’d move. That’s what people do when they feel pain. They move.

If you want to develop discipline, you have to feel the pain that will force you to get moving. Are you doing all that you can to become the person that you want to be? If you keep not living up to your own expectations what is your life going to look like in 5 years or 10? Stare at that. Be hurt by it. Then move.

Division is death. Understanding is life and light.

Be slow to anger and quick to forgive. Don’t pursue a path of isolation, pursue the path of reconciliation. Peace and harmony are principles of the Jedi, not division and discord. Seek understanding.

Elements of Emotional Fitness

If physical fitness is the ability to engage in physical stress longer and recover more quickly; then emotional fitness is the ability to engage in emotional stress longer and recover more quickly.

Elements of emotional fitness:

Emotional strength is the ability to endure emotional stress without breaking down, withdrawing, or exploding.

Emotional agility is the ability to appropriately move from one emotional encounter to another.

Emotional flexibility is the ability to hold different emotions at once.

Develop your emotional fitness by becoming more emotionally aware. Identify what you are feeling and why. Next, take responsibility for your feelings and your expression of those emotions. No one ‘made’ you feel a certain way. You have the capacity to choose how you feel and how you express those feelings. Take responsibility for them.

Practice mindfulness. Explore the gap between thought and reaction. The more time you give yourself, the more mature you’ll be in how you’ll choose to respond. Finally, develop your empathy. Accept your emotions and extend yourself grace for feeling what you feel. Offer that same acceptance and grace to others.

You must die

To become a Jedi Master you are required to die.

Most people are trapped in mediocrity. We know this. We intuitively know that we could be more -- that we're not giving life all that we have, that we are shrinking back from being the person that we could be. We cry that we lack discipline, but discipline isn't the issue. We don't do the things that we know that we should because we don't want to do them.

Life is comfortable as it is. Even though it's painful, it's a comfortable pain. It's the pain that we know. To move beyond will require that we face the pain of the unknown. It's a risk where we don't know the outcome. It's dangerous. It's threatening and we'd rather stick to the pain we know because we've been living with that pain and so we know that we'll continue to live.

A Jedi serves life and the light. To do that we must embrace some elements of death and darkness. There is a natural cycle to things. The planet spins and we have periods of darkness and periods of light. There is a cycle of birth, growth and death. It's the hero's journey. To move from one stage to the next, to move from one day to the next, we have to let go of the previous day, the previous life -- and experience death and darkness.

Our very nature fights against this. We desperately want to live. So we protect ourselves. We shrink back. We remain within our comfort zones. To transform to the next level we must face the pain of discomfort. We must die -- and only when we are dead can we then be reborn.

I need discipline! Do I really? I have discipline. I go to bed at the same time every single day. I get up at the same time every morning. I take a shower and brush my teeth at the same time every day. I eat my meals around the same time every day. There is so much that I do every week like clockwork. I just do them. Believe me when I say that I don't want to. There are plenty of mornings I don't want to get up. I experience just as many evenings that I don't want to go to bed. I don't like doing laundry. I do these things anyways. I know that it's the same for other people as well. There are things that we all do by routine -- but we still complain that we don't have discipline.

No. The problem is that we choose not to do the things that we know we should. It's not an issue of discipline, it's an issue of choice. It's an issue of not caring enough about the task to do it.

If I sit on a tack, I'll leap up. If I'm stung by a bee, I'll jump. If I experience pain; I move. So, I look at my life and I think it's painful; but it's not painful enough and that is why I don't move.

Emotions aren't good or bad, they are just signals that indicate your values. If you like something you're going to be happy or experience joy or contentment or whatever. If you don't like something, you're going to be sad or angry or frustrated. You’re going to feel pain. These emotions indicate the alignment of your experience to your values.

Discipline is its own indicator of your values. If you truly wanted to become the person that you know that you could be; you would move toward it. It's a conundrum. You want it. With all your heart, you want it … but you also don't. To find your potential you need to reconcile that.

Identify and then live your values.

Jedi Philosophy is not the pursuit of happiness

The Jedi Path isn't a path whose end goal is a happy and pain free life. The end goal is service. That path will gladly take you directly through pain that causes anxiety, depression and despair if experiencing that pain helps you become someone who serves more effectively.

The hard news is that it does. Growth and enlightenment only comes through struggle. Going through pain will help you serve and so the Jedi Path isn't an easy one. You must experience trials and pain and even come to embrace those trials and pain in order for you to become a Jedi Knight or Master.

Vanity or Humanity?

Which should a Jedi value more; vanity or humanity?

A person who values vanity more will focus on their image. They seek to impress others through their appearance or their achievements. They make choices in order to preserve their self-image. Posturing becomes more important than connection and in the posturing they lose their integrity. They give away their power to other people; bound by the fear of what others think.

A person who values humanity more will accept the inherent messiness within themselves and others. They will be able to connect deeply with others because they are free to empathize with their shared imperfection. In this, imperfection holds freedom and power.

Envision the worst

Think about your ideal self; the version of you that has become a Jedi Master.

What is the worst situation that you could face? How would your ideal self respond in the face of that worst day? Is your training preparing you for that day? Is it pushing you as hard as possible so that when you face the worst things that you could face, you're able to respond as your ideal self responds?

Be willing to be bored.

A lot of people struggle with meditation because it's just too boring. It's hard to sit still and do nothing for 10 or 30 minutes.

My advice? Do it anyway.

Having an unlimited amount of information and entertainment at our fingertips, we often don't take the time to think for ourselves. We let everyone else do our thinking for us. When we step away from all the distractions and become bored with our lack of stimulation, our mind steps back up to the plate and begins to think for us again, coming up with its own methods of distracting us.

Within that space creativity is born.

I am all that and more

“Well, of course I know him. He’s me.” - Ben Kenobi

Anytime you hear or offer criticism, turn it back on yourself and find how it is true about you. What frustrates you? What’s your pet peeve? In what way do you do that very thing?

It might take a little bit of work to find it, but it’s there.

“He’s a killer.”

Perhaps you’ve never taken a life, but maybe you’ve tried to murder someone’s character by speaking about them behind their back without knowing all the facts.

It doesn’t matter how extreme someone gets; if you’re willing to take the time to meditate on it, you can find how it applies to you. Then, knowing that you’ve done these things you can take steps to improve your character. But more importantly, you can learn empathy and be quick to forgive when someone offends you.

Ego is an obstacle to inner peace

“There is no emotion; there is peace”

The obstacle to inner peace is the ego. Our ego is self-centered, we see ourselves as the main character, and see the world through a lens of how it impacts us. That lens is colored with judgment and expectation. We’re quick to find fault and then dwell on that fault, ignoring all positives. Make one mistake and all we can think about is how much of an incompetent idiot that we are for having made that mistake, completely blinding ourselves to all the successes that we had. We set expectations for our experiences and our interactions with other people and if one thing is out of place, we focus on that one thing, ignoring everything else that is perfectly ordered. This is what steals our peace.

The path to inner peace lies within our ability to detach and become the observer.

Have you ever been extremely angry and in the middle of yelling at someone and you suddenly detach and become the observer and just watch yourself being angry? Or maybe it happened when you were filled with pain and anguish and you were crying and suddenly you detach and observe the tears falling from your face?

There is no emotion as the observer and as the observer you have the power to be the puppet master of your embodied self. You are able to recognize your emotions as being an extension of your ego. You feel anger or hurt because something didn’t meet your expectation of right behavior. You feel grief because something was taken from you. You feel happiness because expectations were met and you couldn’t find fault.

These emotions are fleeting because your expectations will shift and change. It’s unwise to pursue happiness because happiness lacks substance. Your expectations are met for a brief moment and then your expectations shift and change and once again you are chasing happiness.

Inner peace comes when you become a servant. You’re no longer the main character; instead you play a supporting role, helping others.

When you are in conflict with someone, focus on how you can best serve them rather than looking to be the one being served. You were cut off in traffic? Someone cut in line in front of you? Someone is letting their children raise a ruckus in a confined space like a plane, train, or bus and it’s irritating you -- It’s understandable to be angry because your expectations for proper behavior aren't being met. However, consider things from their perspective. In the moment you don’t know -- indeed, you cannot know -- what motivated them to behave in such a manner. Perhaps they have good reason, and if you knew that reason, you would count it a joy to be

accommodating. Since you don’t know, count it a joy anyway. When you feel yourself reacting with anger or frustration, step back into the observer. Instead of acting out with emotion, resolve to serve them, even if they aren’t considerate or appreciative. You can’t control how another person behaves. You can only control yourself. What you can do is set a positive example. Act with gratitude, patience, and kindness. It may not have an impact on the person who is inconsiderate and creates an imposition; but it does have an impact on you and those around you.

Walk into rooms that are too big for you.

If you ever look up from what you're doing in life and feel that you are comfortable with the size and intelligence of your audience, it's time to move to a different room.

Find a room that you feel small and out of place in. It's like a pair of pants. Buy a pair that is too big for you and if you're not careful, you'll expand to fit the pants. The more time you spend in a room that is too big for you, you'll discover that you will grow and expand to fit the room.

Be practical in your service

Developing practical skills is more important for the act of service than supernatural training; the largest portion of your training toward the goal of service should be in the development and practice of practical skills.

First Aid and Wilderness Medicine is going to be more trusted and more useful in serving others in a crisis than healing Crystals and Reiki ever will.

Learning Communication and Leadership skills is going to be more valuable to your life and those that you wish to serve than astral projection.

Conflict Resolution and Self-Defense skills are going to be more valuable than the exploration of Psionics.

I'm not saying that you shouldn't explore these spiritual and supernatural skills; there is some benefit to be had in your own personal self-development. However, if your aim is to serve others and make the world a better place, a significant majority of your training should be devoted to practical training.

Little things matter

When I was 12, while waiting on the school bus in the mornings, I would wave to every car that passed. It was just something to do because I was bored. One morning I was deep in thought about something and didn't wave as I normally did. One car passed and then turned around and pulled in next to me and asked if I was okay. I was a little shocked and said "Yes, why do you ask?" She told me that she drove by every morning on the way to work and looked forward to me waving, and when I didn't, she was worried that something was wrong.

That interaction had a profound impact on me. The smallest interactions that you have day to day that may not mean something to you, may mean a great deal to someone else; positive or negative. Be mindful in your interactions. Approach people with empathy and compassion; concerned for their well-being.

Over 30 years later, I still think about that interaction and its effect on me. It was just a small thing that taught me a huge life lesson. I'm grateful that this was a positive interaction, but there are off-hand remarks from other interactions that have left deep scars.

Little things that you might quickly forget in minutes can be major moments that shape the way someone views the world.

Most choices are neither good or bad

Choices are not good or bad. It's the level of commitment that we apply to a choice that matters. You can make a 'bad' choice, but if you commit to the choice, you can find ways to make it work and turn a bad choice into a great choice. The important thing is to make a choice and then commit yourself to that choice and commit to putting in the work needed to make the choice a great one.

This concept is probably best applied where you're not sure what decision to make or are evaluating a decision that you've made. If you don't know which choice to make -- just pick one and commit to doing everything that you can to make it a good decision. If you've made a decision and are evaluating it; determine whether or not you're willing to commit and put in the effort to make it a good decision. If you're not, what can you do to shift your perspective in order to be willing to fully commit to it? When you can't find a way to do that; then it's time to think about a different decision.

There are times when you have to accept that a course of action was the wrong course of action. It can be challenging to admit that because of the time and energy that we've put into making something work.

But many times, saying that you make a bad choice, or accepting it when someone else tells you that you're making a bad choice is more about relieving yourself from the responsibility to the effort and commitment that you make to that choice. Whether a choice that you make becomes a good choice or a bad choice is completely your responsibility. Accept that responsibility and do everything in your power to turn your choices into great ones.

Why are you a Jedi?

It’s a question that almost every training group asks in some way, shape or form. For example; Who is your favorite Jedi? Why?

You’ve become a Jedi because you were in some way inspired by them. Identifying exactly what about the Jedi, especially your favorite Jedi, points you in the general direction of the person that you wish to become and the ideals that you would like to stand for.

You want to be a Jedi. Meditate on that for a day or a week. Why Jedi and not a Klingon or Vulcan? Why a Jedi and not a Bene Gesserit? Why a Jedi and not a Maiar Wizard? What, specifically, about Star Wars and the Jedi especially have drawn you to them? What does that say about your beliefs, desires, and values?

Use that knowledge to shape your journey on the Jedi Path. The people that you train with; your order or a Master, shouldn’t dictate your journey. They should only be there to provide assistance, not completely shape it -- after all, you’re the one walking your path. No one can walk it for you, so you might as well determine what that journey looks like.

The weight of duty and obligation

“I will not shirk doing what needs to be done. Even if it causes me pain.” - Master Relin Druur

When you take on a project and have a deadline -- even if it’s one that you give yourself - you are taking on the weight of obligation and duty. You’ve made a promise to yourself and/or someone else that you’d complete a task. The longer you carry that obligation without working on it, the heavier it will become and the more damage that it will cause.

In college I did everything last minute. In one case I wrote a 10 page paper in one day because I kept putting it off thinking that the paper was due at the end of the semester like all my other classes' papers were due. It was due a week earlier and I missed the deadline and was told that I would get 10 points deducted from my grade for every day that it was late. So I knocked it out the next day. I always told myself and everyone else that I was a procrastinator for a reason. I did my best work, I said, last minute. Truth be told, I did all my work last minute, so there was nothing to really compare it to. I can speak from experience when I say that procrastination is damaging.

First, my procrastination damages me. It depletes my self-confidence because I’m not acting in integrity. I know that I shouldn’t wait until the last minute to do something and when I act against what I know is right, I’m not in integrity with myself. I teach myself that I’m not to be trusted. It’s also damaging because my own brain knows that I should be fulfilling my obligation and so the guilt from not getting to it weighs on my psyche and reduces the enjoyment that I find in the things that I’m choosing to do over what I promised that I would do.

And, of course, procrastination damages your reputation. In my life I’ve had people volunteer their services to me on various projects. So many have completely failed to follow through that when someone procrastinates on the task that they volunteered to do, I have to expend extra time and energy making preparations for the growing chance that they’ll not complete their portion of the project on time or won’t complete it at all. If they procrastinate but still manage to get it in on time, that time spent preparing for their failure to get it in on time is no less gone. I’m far less likely to ask them to do anything again.

It speaks a lot to a person’s leadership capability. Those that wait until the last minute show that they can’t properly manage their own time, but less provide leadership and guidance for other people.

A Jedi is dedicated to their mission. When you take on an obligation, that becomes your Jedi mission. It doesn’t matter if it’s a small and unimportant task that you promised to do, it still carries the weight of your integrity. Don’t shirk your duty and put off your mission until tomorrow.

Work on it as soon as possible and lighten the weight that sits on your shoulders. You'll be better off for it.